

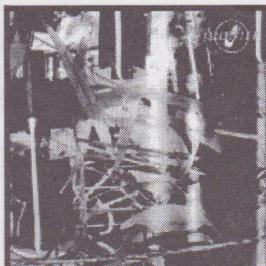
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PUNK PLANET ^{\$3.95} MAGAZINE

issue #42 • March/April 2001



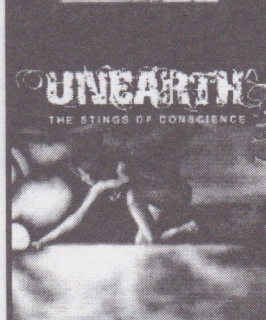
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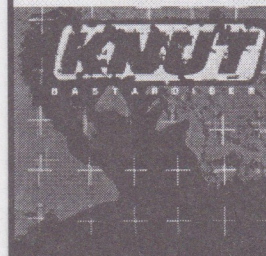
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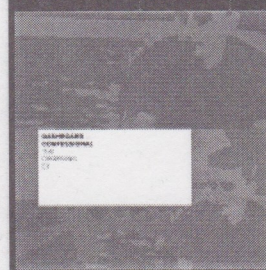
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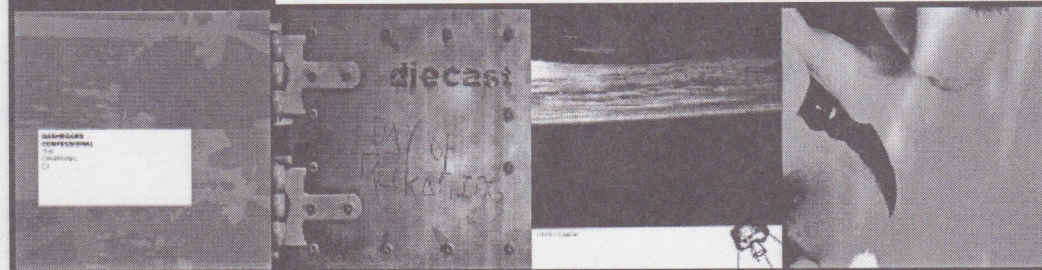


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Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

This issue marks the final step in a non-stop production cycle (mag/book/mag/book/mag/mag) that has lasted since last June. I can't say that I'm sorry for it to come to a close. After doing the magazine for almost seven years now, the last eight months are the closest I've ever come to complete burnout and fatigue. The only thing, I'm proud to say, that has kept me coming into work every day is a fierce belief in what we've been working on. This issue is a perfect example of that.

To be able to bring unheard voices into the open—and to an audience willing to listen—has always driven a lot of the work we've published here at *Punk Planet*. But with this issue, I feel like that's especially true. We're at a crossroads with how we look at capital punishment as a country. Our home state of Illinois has bravely stepped forward and halted its executions (at least temporarily) while they examine the system to see if it's being used fairly (here's a tip Governor Ryan: *it isn't*). There are many states that are considering joining Illinois in reexamining their policies regarding execution. Helping bring the discussion into hard focus is the fact that George W Bush, a man who as governor of Texas gleefully sent 152 people to their death, now sits in the White House. For many, the feeling is that the time to act is upon us.

"Finding Life on Death Row" is our way of adding a new voice to the death row debate. It would be easy—as many magazines have done already—to trot out facts and figures showing that the death penalty is unfairly administered and a useless

deterrent or to talk to lawyers and activists who say that killing people, guilty or not, is wrong. But what's the point of rehashing what's already available? We felt that the best work we could do towards enhancing the discussion would be to speak with those that the debate is about: *people living on death row*. Getting this cover story wasn't easy (see the intro to the piece itself for more). I hope opens your eyes.

Death row isn't the only topic that may raise some eyebrows this issue. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict, psychiatric drugs, phone sex . . . this issue doesn't tread lightly through easily navigatable terrain—we barrel through some pretty thorny situations. Don't like our takes? Please write in. After a few issues of being bumped due to space, our mail section is back in full force. Please feel free to add your voice to the fray.

Finally, this introduction wouldn't be complete without both a plug for our book, *We Owe You Nothing: Punk Planet, the collected interviews*, as well as a thank you to those of you that have already bought it. Featuring 25 conversations with some of the most important figures and thinkers in the underground, your library would be incomplete without it. Strapped for cash? We're selling it for cheaper than anyone else at our website, www.punk-planet.com. Already bought the book? We're your biggest fan!

Enjoy the issue, enjoy the book, enjoy the fact that spring is upon us.

DAN

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TA

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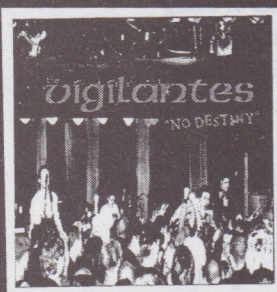
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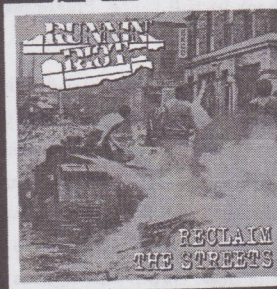
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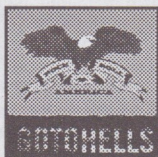
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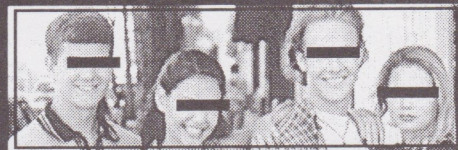
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- 004 | **song of zarathustra** "discography vol. 1"
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- 005 | **the lazarus plot** "the end" 7"
- 006 | **the hidden chord** "suicide note to myself"
b/w "last word" 7"
- 008 | **switchblade** s/t 10" (u.s. press)
- 009 | **the hidden chord** "eight blue eyes" CD
(split release w/ heart of a champion)
- 016 | **the plastic constellations** "let's war"
CD (split release w/ modern radio)

{out in january}

- 010 | **the vida blue** "our miracle point of contact"
LP and CD (split release w/ lance harbor)
- 012 | **the crush** "eyes to break the ice" 7"
- 021 | **rivethed** "we don't fuck around" 7"
- 024 | **bright eyes** "motionSickness" b/w
"soon you'll be leaving your man" 7"
- 026 | **cadillac blindside** "read the book, seen
the movie" LP (CD on soda jerk)

{the months following january}

- 004 | **song of zarathustra** "discography vol. 1"
CD (the long awaited digital edition,
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- 011 | **neil perry** s/t 5" picture disc
- 014 | **purist** s/t 12" w/ etched b-side
- 018 | **blow up** s/t CD
- 020 | **song of zarathustra** "the birth of tragedy"
LP (CD on troubleman unlimited)
- 023 | **makara** discography LP
- 025 | **the hidden chord** "abigail vongetti: a
musical sound recording by the hidden
chord" CD-EP (10" on level plane)
- 027 | **har mar superstar** s/t picture disc LP
(CD on kill rock stars)
- 028 | **the crush** "tonight will ruin tomorrow" CD

{later}

- 007 | **the khayembii communique** / **the vida
blue** split 10" (we promise.)
- 009 | **the hidden chord** "eight blue eyes" the
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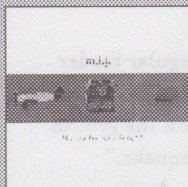
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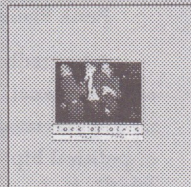
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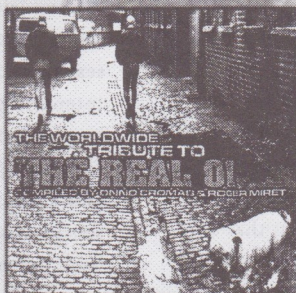
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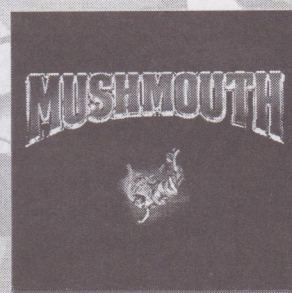
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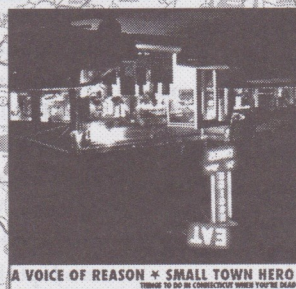
Brutal Metal-Core At It's Best



VOICE OF REASON * smalltown hero

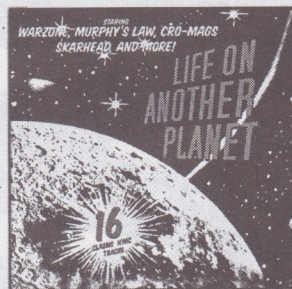
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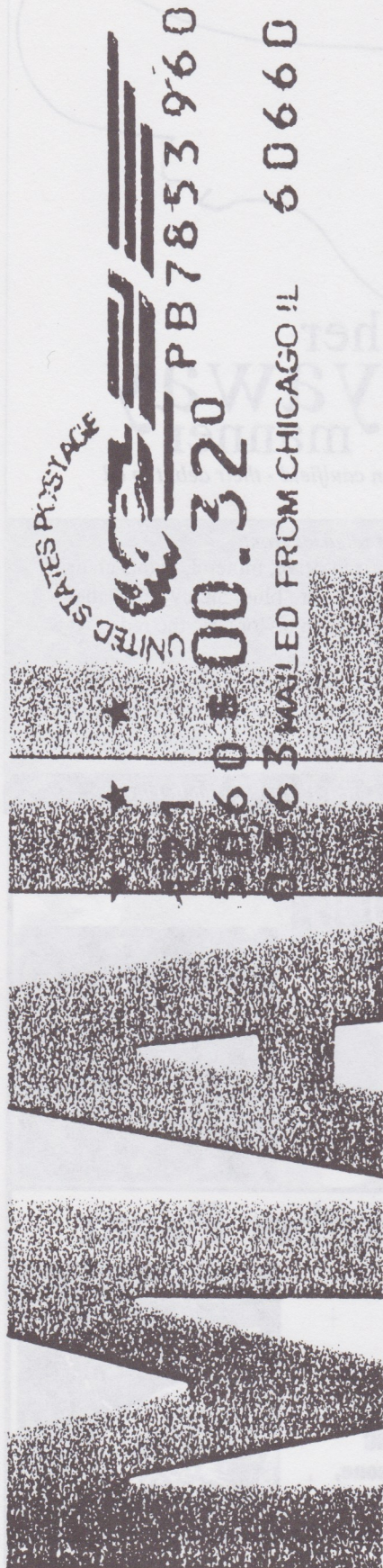


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The Future is Now

Punk Planet—

I very much enjoyed Sam McPheeter's article on the collapse of Iridium [columns, PP39]. From 1998-99, I was employed at the advertising agency, Amirrati Puris Lintas, as a junior art director, where I occasionally worked on the Iridium account.

Here's some highlights:

One thing that little people realize is that our favorite terrorist, Osama Bin Laden's brother was on the Iridium board and a major financial backer.

Iridium was the first international brand advertising campaign to be simultaneously launched in every country at the exact same time. This took a lot of money, and lots of planning. Not only that, but they forced the agency to eat thousands in losses because of their claim that their logo was 1/8" off of where it should be.

Not only did the phones fail in Kosovo, but the company had planned to aid the earthquake in Honduras and other natural disasters by dropping the phones from the air attached to little parachutes. They were never able to get their act together enough to do any of these schemes, nor their favorite idea, which was lowering a special made "iridium phone booth" and laying it on top of Mt. Everest.

Meanwhile at the agency, everyone was running around like crazy because the client was furious that they wanted to sell a million phones and only 50,000 had been sold. We later found out that they only sold that little because Motorola couldn't produce them fast enough. There was actually quite a big demand for people to spend \$7 a minute on a phone call.

The best part is, that the phones didn't really work very well. They worked if you in a city, and they worked if you were completely in the middle of nowhere. But if you were somewhere in-between, you had problems. This was because in cities, the phone used a cellular signal just like everyone else. In the middle of nowhere, it used the satellite. But if it was in between, it *tried* to use cellular, since it was much cheaper for Iridium, but often

it would switch back and forth between the two, giving the user a great deal of static.

One of the execs at the ad agency said something to the effect of "it's ok, because people are already used to cell phones not working all the time." But I thought this one was supposed to work everywhere?

Iridium has been widely called the greatest business disaster in history, and a lot of trendy jargon heads, when talking about the prospects of a new dot-com, often as "will it be the next Amazon, or Iridium?"

Regards,

marc punknet

www.punknet.com

It's Bigger than Hip-Hop

Punk Planet—

Admittedly, I'm not a regular reader of Punk Planet. However, I'm writing to say I appreciated your piece on the growth of political hip-hop ["Housequake," PP38]. Unfortunately, writer Aaron Shuman engages in the verbal backhanding of hip-hop's Afrocentric "golden era" all too common in the mainstream and "alternative" media. While it is easy to leap on, it's not accurate or correct.

Shuman writes: "The first Nation of hip-hop [sic] was a weak house, undermined by conflicts of race, gender and sexuality, then [sic] the new Nation don't intend to go out like that. With an emphasis on knowing one's roots, on human rights that transcend civil rights, and a commitment to collective- and consensus-based organizing, the groups being built promise a strong house indeed."

The term "hip-hop nation" has been used since the movement's early days to refer primarily to African and Latino youth around whom the music, culture and politics emerged and, despite attempts to paint otherwise, still resides. Primarily — and still today — the music, culture and politics embody the unique struggles and experiences of people of color in America. White kids can identify with that, say they're "down" with it, or attempt to adopt the nation for themselves, but the culture developed in great part to address the feelings of disenfranchisement

experienced by people of color.

The first "Nation of hip-hop" [read: late '80s, primarily Black and Afrocentric] was, in fact, hardly as wracked by "conflicts of race, gender and sexuality" insofar as the unity demonstrated by the Zulu Nation, Stop The Violence Movement, Intelligent Black Women's Coalition and numerous community groups that spoke out on behalf of our civil and human rights as people of color and of the oppression we experienced. Clearly, with any cultural movement there are struggles, but the first Nation faced its fiercest enemies in the primarily white-dominated media, which hyperanalyzed and misrepresented everything from the work of Public Enemy to the fear of the violent Black male epitomized by FBI interference against N.W.A. over "Fuck Tha Police." Undermined by issues of race? Only insofar as the onslaught of establishment media criticism did its work in attempting to tear down and demonize the rightful African-led protest to a genocide that was going on, and continues, against people of color in this country.

Additionally, the sneering posits of "emphasis on knowing one's roots" (implying the first Nation didn't know theirs); "human rights that transcend civil rights" (ignoring the fact that, as cases like Amadou Diallo's illustrate, while Shuman's Nation may have forgotten civil rights, the rest of us realize our civil rights are still threatened and their defense goes hand-in-hand, as MOVE pointed out, with the movement for human rights); and "a commitment to collective- and consensus-based organizing" (more left buzzwords than any real knowledge of how groups like the Zulu Nation operate) are simply laughable abstractions. In his essay "The White Negro," Norman Mailer wrote of "a new breed of adventurers who drifted out at night looking for action with a black man's code to fit their facts." Do some research.

Today, writers like Shuman are not alone in trying to discredit the efforts of the "first Nation" in their quest to promote the 'new' Nation.

The concept of the hip-hop nation has been expanded to include all races and ethnicities, primarily by profiteering record companies and those looking to benefit financially from a whitewashed image. Many

so-called hip-hop magazines look to move issues and writers look to get paid for hack jobs in the quest for the rainbow Nation. While this is indeed a pleasant image, it attempts to negate the work of pioneers in building a culture of resistance that is the basis for hip-hop by making outlandish, often misleading, claims. Obviously, whites and others are not exempt from experiencing problems and disillusionment, but African people and Latinos, for the most part, continue to live at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, are the majority of the prison population and internees of the criminal justice system, and confront racial prejudice that impacts employment, housing and educational opportunities. To pretend our experiences in building the Nation Shuman vilifies as having implicitly "gone out like that" is troubling, not to mention false.

Ernesto Aguilar
Radio Sexto Sol

To Serve and Protect Who?

Dear Punk Planet—

Kudos to Kari Lydersen for compiling a truly informative article, breaking the artifice of the "to serve and protect" facade of the police department in our country ["War on the Streets" PP37].

My father is a retired police officer of 25 years. As children, he would tell my sister and I whimsical tales of drug busts and car chases; locking up the bad guy and throwing away the key. As docile children, we were conditioned to seek refuge in the police, and view them as the embodiment of altruism. Never would we second guess their intentions. Yet as we grow, we learn. We experience. We understand. Through this experience and understanding, it is quite easy for me to make a sweeping generalization regarding the police in America. I truly believe that men and women enter the force for either vindictive or idealistic reasons. Once that man or woman has adapted to that societal position of power, those once held idealistic intentions quickly vanish, or become tainted by the corruption encroaching them.

As I grew, my father's stories transformed from light-hearted tales to gritty accounts. He would nonchalantly recall the

time when he would drop a drunk "spic" in a "nigger" neighborhood "to let them have at him." Or perhaps the time my father and his partner beat a drunken man so badly with their flashlights, they left him bleeding on the streets, afraid of the punishment for their actions. "Things have changed...." my father often reminisces "in the good old days we use to just shoot cop killers, now they run them through the system." These are the words of my father, America's finest, hired to serve and protect.

What is it about this role in our society that can deteriorate a human, a loving father, to the point of immorality? One begins to serve their self interests, feed their racism, and redefine laws. They are reduced to pure animal instinct and act according to their vengeful passion. How frightening is it that "police brutality" and "injustice within the system" have become conventional household names? There is an acrid poison that is flowing through the police departments. This poison of privileged power instills within them the lust to torture, beat, kill, and eventually justify. To always somehow justify.

There is never a resolution to the heated debates that my father and I constantly find ourselves in. We can merely provide each other with our own perspectives. Perspectives which either strengthen our own beliefs, or perhaps instill empathy within us toward the other's view. I am not a police officer, I never will be. And for this reason I suppose I can never truly understand my father's perspective. However, I do know that it is my father who prompted me to know my rights, affiliate with my local Copwatch chapter, and spread awareness to break the myth surrounding the police. I encourage each of you to do the same.

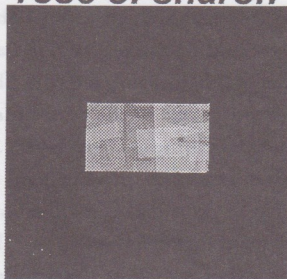
I find that I am no longer afraid of the drug dealers, the thieves, the gang members or the molesters. I find myself more frightened of those men and women who are in the police, wallowing in that position of power, and hired to serve and protect... their own interests.

Aubrey Edwards
Austin, Texas

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rose of sharon



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7 song cdep
prepare to have your
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**the warren
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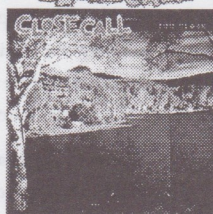
"rendezvous with you"
6 song cdep
the limited edition
spiral bound notebook

slow fore



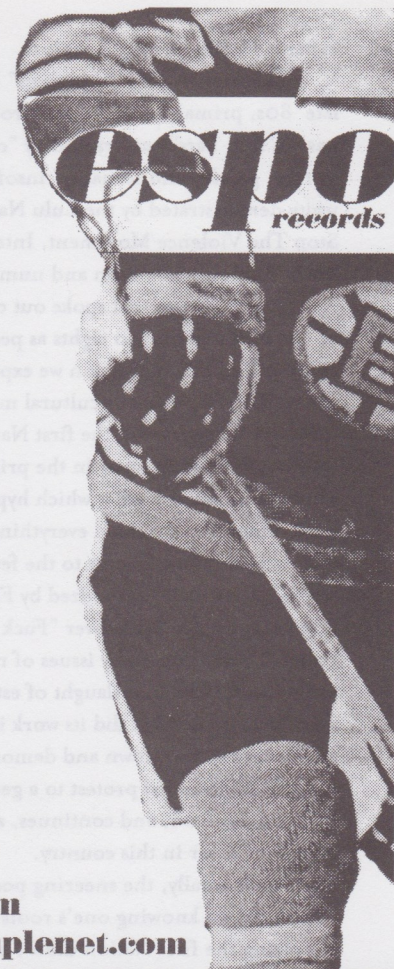
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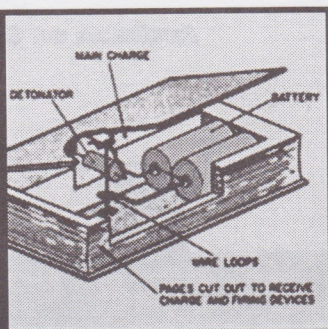
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COLUMN

some people hide their bombs in books
MIMI NGUYEN



We're running late. (Should I mention, as usual?) The combination of downtown traffic and bad navigating choices means we're in danger

of missing the boat. Literally. Mark makes "Ack!" noises as we pull into an expensive parking garage, and a "Fuck it!" after glancing at the dashboard clock.

We run, grab our tickets, and get in line behind a family of four. The two children are under ten, and as the line lurches forward I wonder what could possibly be instructive about the destination we're all headed for, that a seven year-old might *learn* something. After a (very cold) ten-minute ferry ride with at least two hundred other sightseers we're on The Rock. Alternately described by travel guides as "a perfect vacation spot" and "a must-see," Alcatraz Island is the former federal penitentiary turned national historical park, bird sanctuary, and public attraction. Available for a dollar at self-serve kiosks at the dock, a brochure states, "This story begins in 1859, when eleven military prisoners arrive on the island with the first Army garrison, and ends in 1963 when the last inmates are transferred and Alcatraz is abandoned by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons."

Wary about stealing in front of state employees, I hesitate before taking one.

How does a federal prison become a popular tourist attraction? Prisons, like police and armed forces, are a part of the coercive machinery of the state. For thirty years Alcatraz served a dual function in the U.S. Bureau of Prisons system as both an institution of severe incarceration and exemplary symbol of state control. Today, recreational convicts may board the Blue and Gold fleet to visit the island penitentiary and inhabit the ghostly life spaces of its inmates. Fundamental to its conception as a set of educative and civilizing agencies, the state presents the prison

as a civics lesson, but a fun, "interactive" one. Operated by the National Park Service, the Alcatraz tour promises an adventurous landscape as such, more real than the wax museums or celebrity restaurants on the mainland but just as virtual—a place of punishment turned educational theme park.

The hike into the interior of the island is measured from cannon to guard station, a memorial landscape dotted by the instruments and monuments of both war and imprisonment. An audio tour—narration provided by two Alcatraz correctional officers and former inmates—is available in the lobby of the prison, outside the souvenir shop. Most of the green-jacketed attendants are of color; the supervisor who tears the ticket stub is white, and a former Marine. Told to follow the blue line into the cellblock, another sign obligingly let us know when it's time to push "play."

The audio tour seeks to provide a concentrated historical memory of the cellblock and the meaning of the prison. The assumption might be that without the audio tour, you might not know what you're looking at. You might miss the value of a particular stretch of cellblock, the nuance of steel bars. The audio tour interprets for you. So almost everyone wears headphones and follows the prescribed route, turning when told and looking when instructed to do so, even when what's there to see is long gone. (Are we supposed to imagine surly inmates in their cells, dressed in prison blues?) There are pasteboard panoramas with mugshots and pull-quotes about Alcatraz's more infamous inmates (Al Capone and "Machine Gun" Kelly, among them) and a disastrous 1946 escape involving the prison librarian. In some cells the products of years of confinement are displayed behind plate glass—landscape paintings and pencil drawings of inmates, paper mache heads left by a trio of escapees.

With a shrug (his) and a baring of teeth (mine) Mark and I find ourselves following orders, ducking through doorways on cue. We move through the cellblock, touching those places where the plaster has rotted away, fingering the exposed steel rods beneath the painted surfaces, noticing the debris accumulating in the crevices: rocks, pull-tops, cellophane wrappers, dust. Doorsills are graffiti-ed with hearts and recent dates. The gun

VS PPP42

gallery—the caged balconies from which guards monitored the cellblocks—looms above us, the locks that once held machine guns, perhaps, still in place. And even though a steel firebox mounted on the wall of the D-block is pierced by bullet holes, no one approaches; the other tourists are busy standing between the radiators to look up at the Birdman's former cell.

We are invited to step inside the "hole," a series of cinderblock cells with no light fixtures and thick steel doors. There is tourist trash in the sink—a Calistoga bottle, candy wrappers—and the toilet is filled with lumpy concrete. The voice of a former inmate echoes in my head, "I would take a button and throw it up into the air. I'd turn myself around and around and then drop to the floor to search for the button in the dark. And when I found it I'd do it all over again." The floor is cold to the touch.

Well-equipped tourists with video cameras in hand pan the cellblocks through viewfinders and eyepieces. I could say something (simplistic) about the filtering of reality through a televisual screen, but it's not as if the experience of touring a prison isn't already a bizarre cultural production and always interpreted through one ideological lens or another.

The tape skips—I go from an inmate memory of prison food to the rat-tat-tat of a gun battle—and I have to rewind.

The audio tour and several brochures also detail escape attempts—inmates who steal Army uniforms, saw through bars, dig tunnels with spoons, throw themselves into the frigid waters of the Bay. That most end in the deaths of the escapees is stated matter-of-factly, and the manner of their deaths sometimes elaborated upon in chronological order. "He was shot by guards. They died inside the prison walls from gas. He died from hypothermia and exhaustion, swimming to the Gold Gate Bridge. He was executed." A map locates the numbered spots on the island where these attempts occurred, and where their deaths presumably took place.

I think we are supposed to be impressed by the technological and natural advantages of the prison, by its high walls, its frigid moat and once state-of-the-art machinery. Impressed by the prison's record of failed escapes and by extension, its success as a

penitentiary, the scent of misery that must have permeated even the concrete here. Last but hardly least we are expected to congratulate the state for its capacity for (imagined) reform. The prison tour suggests the U.S. Bureau of Prisons decommissioned Alcatraz because it was a carceral relic, a national campaign for prison reform in the 1960s bringing attention to rehabilitation. We are prompted to believe that the state abandoned the Rock in a fit of enlightenment, and that the carceral system in the time since has improved.

I don't think Mark and I are impressed.

Amusement parks and other tourist sites attempt to provide the illusion of carnival, of spontaneous pleasure, in a rational and controlled environment. Rides, theaters, employees in wacky animal costumes, carefully cultivated paths that *seem* to wander. Alcatraz is a disciplined and disciplinary space in which the rational and controlled environment is the attraction—you arrive to see the apparatus of state control in effect, or its aftermath. You witness a certain display of power—the barbed wire, the closet-sized cells, the exposed toilets, the bars over windows, the series of locked steel doors, the poverty of prison existence, the extremity of governmentality. The regimentation of everyday life (narrated by inmate and guard), the spectacle of the repression of unruly bodies (asked to imagine the prisoners in their cells), the map of escape attempts and murdered inmates—all this is both the exhibition and the lesson.

Here, the exercise of power is the story but how it happens is the question.

We learn that arriving prisoners were given a copy of the "Regulations for Inmates, U.S.P." and expected to keep this in their cells at all times. Regulation number five of fifty-three states, "You are entitled to food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. Everything else is a privilege." I am reminded of French theorist Michel Foucault who famously examined the modernization of the carceral system, the coercive technologies of both discipline and punishment enacted minutely on the body of the convict. Isolated in individual cells and subjected to seemingly ceaseless surveillance, the prisoner is taught to regulate his own

behavior, to internalize the eye of power. The disciplinary regime of the prison is thus the calculated manipulation of the body and its elements, gestures, environment. To terrorize, to make the convict a docile and self-regulating body.

What purpose does a national park play when it once served as an institution of confinement? Monuments, national parks and tourist spaces are meaning-making machines that are produced not only by material means but also historical processes and symbolic gestures. Their

function—undoubtedly instrumental and ideological—cannot be hidden; they make visible those histories that are appropriate to the political project. (It is an act that also produces its opposite: a repressed history, a state of amnesia, a marginalized population, a contest of meaning. But how to access it—?) The available, official resources provide the tourist a specific ideological lens and historical memory. Rather than activating an interrogation of historical circumstance, the institutional memory of Alcatraz is deployed as self-evident because the site is open to public inspection. But the interpretative discourse insulates the visitor from the lifespace represented here, while controlling its representation and lodging it firmly within the official historical record.

Mark and I move impatiently around other tourists pausing in doorways and gaping. We watch them pose one at a time behind the bars of the open cells, turning to smile and grin at the camera. A joking, jocular gesture. They make faces, laughing and reaching their arms through the gaps. I step past a well-padded, middle-aged white man into an open cell the size of my closet, ruining the photograph his wife takes to run my hand over the painted cinderblock.

The pretense of occupying the identical space of a prisoner is encouraged. The audio tour suggests you grip the bars, pace the length of the cell. The brochure volunteers a typical scenario, a Choose Your Own Adventure without the choice: "You arrive at U.S. Penitentiary Alcatraz in shackles.... Once on the island and in the cellhouse, you're stripped searched and issued prison clothes." The dramatic reenactment ends on a dire note, "Will you live by the rules and leave Alcatraz when your time is served? Or will you test the rules? Will you be caught and punished? Will you die in a shower-room or recreation-yard stabbing? Or will you escape?"

Mark is unforgiving. He mutters, "I hate that they're smiling and laughing. I wanted to lock them in a cell and leave 'em there overnight in the dark and the cold."

It feels weird. The function of displaying power, its coercive technologies and making it visible for all to see, reimagines the docile body of the convict as a sign of state control and punishment. Like all the stories about failed escapes and long years spent in isolation, the detailed descriptions of locks, doors, and metal detectors, the pretense of inhabiting the lifespace of an inmate serves the display of power, if only to impress upon the visitor the totality of the disciplinary regime. The prison tour deliberately references the allure of the historical cinematic record—*The Rock*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*,

The Green Mile, *Shawshank Redemption*, all featuring the singular prisoner as rebel protagonist—and invites a fantasy of temporary identification. (It works better without real bodies—the fantasy is more complete and less complicated.) What is most ordinary in the context of the tourist destination becomes a source of fascination for the visitor—cows being milked on a farm or an inmate's daily routine.

But the fantasy breaks apart. Occupying that imaginary space is impossible because the cell door is open; as a visitor you can always step outside the confines of cinderblock and steel bars to see yourself from the side of power. It is unlikely any of the tourists will ever find themselves incarcerated. Aggregate buying power makes the middle-classes the prime consumers of such historical displays. The real appeal of such fantasies may be that they express to desire *not to know* the material and social conditions of the prison-industrial complex in the present, or the stories of complicity with various forms of state power. The United States has a prison population that is overwhelmingly working-class, poor, and of color. The fantasy of identification reiterates the efficiency of Alcatraz as a penitentiary and the state as a force of control. Invited to admire the case hardened, tool-resistant steel bars from inside the cell, the Alcatraz prison tour does not seek to terrorize visitors with the display of coercive technologies but to place them on the side of power, to understand the prison and the carceral system as operating "for the good of all." Or as social theorist Tony Bennett remarks about museums and exhibitions (and the prison tour fits right in), "This power subjugates by flattery, placing itself on the side of the people by affording them a place within its workings; a power which placed the people behind it, inveigled into complicity with it rather than cowed into submission before it."

We return the tape recorders to the attendants and wander around the grounds, depressed. I think we don't know how to respond, or recuperate the experience. One of three souvenir shops on the island is just inside the administration building and we step into the fray. (There is another shop at the wharf where the boat docks.) That a penitentiary inspires so much commercial kitsch involves some kind of blind spot; really, I just don't know what to say anymore as I take in the display. There are "genuine reproductions" of Alcatraz prison silverware and guards' key sets, coffee table books and testimonials from guards and prisoners alike, and a 1960s recipe pamphlet put together by the guard's wives. (How about Warden So-and-So's wife's peach cobbler?) Postcards of the bird sanctuary, plaster statues of the lighthouse and the main building holding the cellblock, and an exact replica of the booklet of rules given to each inmate upon arrival. It is near Christmas, but maybe the shop always does so much business; the register rings and rings.

We skip the thirteen-minute documentary about the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz by the American Indian Movement, on purpose. Did we have to see it to know which side was the "right" side? Walking through the back of the dim auditorium we hear snatches of the narration: "...finally public support had dwindled and the Army was able to move in and take back

Alcatraz...." Reboarding the ferry a few people are carrying their new souvenirs in plastic bags that read, "I did time at Alcatraz" above a broadly drawn caricature of a figure holding the bars in front of him. We're finally tired and just want to go home.

Mark takes a photograph.

...

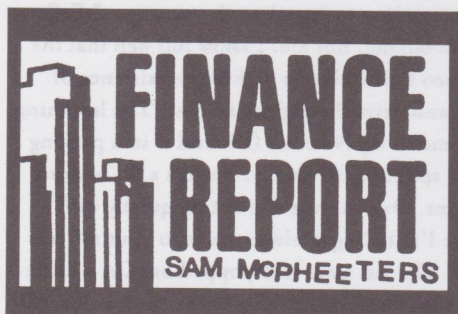
Thanks to Mark for taking me sightseeing even though he knows I "ruin" everything because I can't turn off the critique. Thanks also to Jeff Ow who has a whole love/hate relationship for the other island in the Bay Area—Angel Island, an immigration and detention center for Chinese migrants—on his website (<http://www.flowerdrumson.com>). And thanks also to John Burke for his political commitment and analytic insight, as always.

There are any number of activist sources about prisons; some of them are the Sentencing Project (The Sentencing Project / 514 - 10th Street, NW / Suite 1000 / Washington, DC 20004 / <http://www.sentencingproject.org>), the Prison Moratorium Project (<http://www.nomoreprisons.org>), and Critical Resistance (<http://www.criticalresistance.org>).

On the micro-level of surveillance and regulation, talk shows (my personal obsession) are turning to home video to apprehend social transgressions— young girls are filmed in tight clothes, mouthing off, and teenage boys are caught dressing in black tights and make-up by worried parents. Tomboys are asked, "Don't you want the boys to think you're pretty?" and transgendered guests are called upon to "stop lying," and admit to their partners the imagined truth of the body. This "evidence" of "bad" behavior is turned over to a viewing public for collective judgment and to the talk show hosts for "correction" (by drill sergeant or makeover). The recent trend in sending unruly teens to boot camps and jails—and filming their humiliation ("You think you're tough? You're nothing!") and eventual "rehabilitation"—is a disciplinary spectacle requiring the group participation of the audience, jeering and cheering at appropriate intervals.

It sucks.

If you want, write. Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906
e-mail: slander13@mindspring.com.



INDICIES OF DOOM

Around the time this issue hits the stands, the US economy will be chugging into its tenth year of

unprecedented economic growth. Obviously, many people have a stake in predicting when the good times will finally end. Major

economic indicators— unemployment data, orders for consumer goods, housing construction, etc—are subject to intense scrutiny. Minor economic indicators—Christmas tree sales, rising hemlines, etc—have been granted new significance. In order to spare readers of this magazine any further agonizing, I now submit five top secret and highly reliable economic indicators to help us wade through the mass of data. Act accordingly.

USED PANTY SALES INDEX

Ebay recently eliminated their entire used underwear division as part of a general smut flush. They're cleaning house to present a more "family friendly" auction site. A few sullied undie sales can still be found on the space, but it's certainly not the good old days of November 2000 when one could riffle through page after page of corrupted undergarments in alternating contractions of horror and awe. Who sells this stuff? Who buys this stuff? Could the plainly pedestrian prose ("used pair of cotton panties—high bidder pays \$2 shipping and handling") really serve the needs of an extreme fetishist-niche market, or has a larger cultural shift been taking place? Did the technology create a new market, or have the used panty hoarders always been with our species, suffering through silent millennia? Underwear is, after all, heady stuff. Traffic in the fragrances of the human nether regions is a major gauge of Americans' fears and hopes. If you're like me, the mere thought of casting your intimates into the void triggers the most primal of fears—loss, death, fear of the unknown. But the money's not bad. A Mrs. C___ of Pekin, IL reported in the Dec. 11 issue of *Industry Standard* that she'd raised \$4,000 in the last year off panty auctions. Another couple, retirees in Montana (think about this for a moment), stated that they simply haven't been able to meet customer demand, and have resorted to outsourcing fresh unmentionables to friends and neighbors. This could be the market to watch.

There is hope among the exiled that such sites as "used-brasandpanties.com" will fill the vacuum left by Ebay. But, last I checked, their virtual bidding floors were virtually empty. I'd thought about posting some 7" records I was unable to unload on Ebay (in the same spirit of renting hardcore porn videos and dubbing Burl Ives' singing snowman over the juicy bits) but, really, who would get the joke? Ebay's shakeup may have a profound psychological undertow on consumer confidence for years to come.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Possible market downturn by 2nd quarter '01.

PEOPLE GETTING CLOCKED ON THE HEAD INDEX

Years ago, when I lived in New York, an acquaintance managed to drastically lower my quality of life with just one photograph. The picture appeared in NY's *Newsday* and featured the acquaintance gazing heavenward, an anonymous man in the street. At his feet lay the smashed ruins of an air-conditioner, a fatality to the previous man in the street. Walking down the side-

walks of Manhattan was never the same. The possibility existed that, at any given moment, just one of at least ten vertically aligned apartment dwellers had improperly secured their a/c units to their windowsills, resulting in instantaneous and most humiliating death! Reality! Although I think my open air conversations grew more thoughtful and introspective in direct proportion to my escalating fear (certainly I didn't want to get clobbered while making some random rude mouth noise), my confidence in the "New York" brand name had been forever shattered.

Wal-Mart, Sam's Club & Home Depot are all facing this issue now with a series of recent high-profile merchandise topplings and smooshings. OK, so the odds of getting crushed by falling consumer goods in a Home Depot are still one in ten million. But mass psychology is everything in economics. "Sky Shelving," as the practice of stowing overstock thirty feet overhead is known in the retail world, makes good economic sense when pitted against warehouse costs. It looks more like depraved indifference to human life when your shopping cart drifts under these buckling behemoths. Consumer confidence nose dives where issues of cranial integrity are involved. What could be more humiliating than to exit this world under a 2,000 pound pallet of drywall screws? (A: perishing under a pallet of Soft Touch fabric softener?)

Then there is the Butterfly Effect. This is the cocktail party theory of global economics; small actions can have large consequences. The air ripples of a butterfly stretching its wings in Tokyo can, under the right conditions, result in tsunamis ripping down Sunset Boulevard twelve hours later. Guess what, folks—it's no theory! That lady who got clocked by the 72nd Street lamp post that was knocked over by a misguided "Cat In The Hat" balloon during New York's 1997 Thanksgiving Parade? I don't think it's any coincidence that the Russian ruble plunged just a few months later. The Butterfly Effect, you see. Confidence Drift. Now NASA has declassified projections that the "de-orbiting" of 66 Iridium mobile phone satellites (as per orders of bankruptcy court, see PP 38) will produce 1 in 250 odds of someone getting struck upside the noggin by the space debris of a failed marketing plan. Could we be on the cusp of the new wave of humiliating head injuries? Markets aren't going to like that.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Steep declines in technology, insurance, manufacturing. Probable recession within a year.

LAMENESS OF TOM TOMORROW CARTOONS INDEX

Analysts have been quietly tracking this one since 1993, when Mr. Tomorrow's "This Modern World" accused corporate book chains of not carrying Noam Chomsky titles. Inaccuracy aside, the shrill tone of Tomorrow's work has cast a gloom from which the entire American humorist sector has yet to fully recover. Each installment of this obscenely unfunny comic strip contains more than the minimum lethal dose of pedantic baloneyisms and knee-jerk jerkisms. Foreign investors get an eyeful and simply take their cash elsewhere. Every TMW strip published further pushes down

interest in genuinely talented American political cartoonists (Lloyd Dangle, Ted Rall) which in turn dampens market enthusiasm.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Dwindling capital inflows, market panic, spiraling inflation. US dollar bottoms out against Asian currency within six months.

BAD BAND NAME INDEX

It's no secret that Dread Zeppelin's 1989 debut "Whole Lotta Love" 7" on Birdcage Records preceded the US recession of 1990-1992. The Dumbly Named Rock Band Index has been a surprisingly accurate barometer of global economic health ever since. A wave of horrifically named mid-'90s indie acts—"Smashmouth," "Jimmy's Chicken Shack," "Butt Trumpet," "The Smoking Popes"—may very well have set in motion a butterfly effect of back-ground consumer unease that ultimately resulted in the drastic devaluation of the Thai Baht in mid-1997, in turn stimulating a chain of recession that burst the "Asian bubble" in the latter '90s. This is deadly serious business. A brief lull in badly named bands brought on by the recent grunge and punk market collapses probably helped the Hang Seng and Nikkei stocks regain some ground. But new dangers lurk. A much more aggressive strain of musical misnomers looming in the New Metal genre—including "Sevendust," "Papa Roach," and "System Of A Down"—impacts quite badly on consumer expectations in our education system, with trickle down unease disabling savings, home buying and new construction, ultimately infecting monetary supply.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Dire.

WHITE MAN INDEX

Every now and then a rough little character known as The White Man pops out of my mouth and says some very annoying things. Sometimes he makes me do annoying things. Like the time I went through the Taco Bell drive-thru last month and ordered a 7-layer burrito. Simple enough, right? Only when I got a few blocks away and started digging in, it took at least four generous bites before I realized I was eating a meat grande fiesta or whatever and I'd gotten chunks of beef rot stuck between my molars. I mean, what the fuck? There was a scene cut and I suddenly found myself back at the Taco Bell counter, trying to control my voice while demanding to "speak to the manager." Folks, this was the White Man talking, not me. I know full well that the people who work at Taco Bell endure a nightmare existence of caulk-gun guacamole and drive through assishness. The last thing on earth they need is me in my Nike hat (I found it in a parking lot! It's my lucky hat!) spouting off shrilly. But it's a bit beyond my control at that point. One minute I'm sitting quietly with a book, the next minute I'm telling a telemarketer to "put me on with your supervisor." The last time WM popped out (in a Little Italy eatery, offering a loud refrain of "this isn't what I ordered"), the Indonesian Rupiah fell 80 percent. White Man had been in remission through the second and third fiscal quarters of 2000. His strong showing now, starting with the Taco Bell incident and

continuing into the Christmas season—when such phrases as “excuse me, but we were actually in line ahead of you” could be plainly overheard by the general public—may bode particularly harsh tidings.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Kevlar, canned goods, lots and lots of D batteries.



Last Night A Pompadour Saved My Life

The Lovely Delia has helped organize an all girl dance troupe known as the

Actionettes. The name is taken from Delia's band, Action Time, but the Actionettes now include representatives from indie-pop bands all across London.

A word about The Lovely Delia: though she is not universally known by that title, she should be, and I make a point of using it at every opportunity to hasten the day when the world will give her her due. Delia has e-mailed to say that the Actionettes are performing at “a kinda '60s soul/R&B/boogaloo disco thingy...”

I have my doubts. Although I grew up with that kind of music and generally like it a lot, I'm not so fond of kids trying to re-create an era three or four decades down the line. I'm especially cheesed off when said kids are trying to re-create an era that I feel I have a proprietary interest in.

Doesn't matter whether it's neo-mods or neo-hippies or, for that matter, neo-punks; I can't stop myself thinking, “Listen, you little toerags, I was there, I know what it was really like, stop looking at me as though I'm the one that doesn't belong.”

To be fair, thirty years of drugs, alcohol, and selective and fading memory probably leave me with no more accurate a picture of what the '60s or '70s were really like than some swotty teenager who got his or her picture out of old magazines and movies. It's probably more about insecurity: I'm afraid they'll all be looking at me wondering, “What's the unfashionable old git doing here?” while I'll be glaring back, thinking, “You fucking poseurs, I did all this before you were born.”

You could say we deserve each other, and you'd probably be right. Anyway, my worst fear is that this will turn out to be some sort of Northern Soul night, where the dancing is as flawless as the super-stylish '60s-retro threads, and I'd spend the night huddling in the corner like some poor relation invited to the posh relatives' wedding.

But I refuse to miss the Actionettes, so I turn up on the night, negotiate my way through the guest list and the slightly disdainful doorman, and find myself in a half-filled room where,

consoling, most of the people are no more stylish than I am. I don't know a soul, The Lovely Delia is nowhere in sight, and neither is a corner in which to hide.

So I find the only available seat, in what appears to be the absolute center of the room, where I can be examined at leisure by everyone as they come and go. Next to me sits the only couple who appear to be my age or older. Parents of one of the Actionettes, I reckon.

Finally The Lovely Delia enters, somewhat breathless, as is her wont. I don't expect her to be able to lavish too much attention on me, as she'll be busy getting the girls in order, but she snatches me up and steers me to a table on the other side of the room where she introduces me to three people I've never seen before, admonishes me to “play nice,” and disappears.

Oh, but wait, I've seen one of these people before. It's Rachel, who I first met in the Rough Trade Shop a year ago. On that occasion she'd been lumbered with a maniacal Belgian who'd been following Morrissey around the UK and was simultaneously attempting to spark a romance by inviting Rachel, a staunch vegetarian, to a sumptuous meal at the local McDonald's.

Things didn't seem to have picked up that much for Rachel in the intervening year; now she was encumbered with another nutter, this one introduced to me as “the chicken wanker.”

It being one of those bars where everyone is drinking and shouting over the music, it took a while to figure out what being a “chicken wanker” entailed. Or entrained, if you'll indulge me in a very bad pun: it turned out that the young man was a model who'd posed for a provocative photo layout in a chicken slaughterhouse.

“I kept my pants on,” he hastened to assure me, “pants” being used in the British sense (underpants), “and I was never hard.” This, apparently, was meant to let me know that he hadn't been performing actual or simulated sex acts with the chickens.

Lost in the chaos was any reasonable explanation for why someone was posing in his underwear in the middle of a slaughterhouse, or why the pictures were published in one of Britain's leading men's magazines. I chalked it up as yet another of life's enduring mysteries, and eventually the chicken wanker disappeared into the crowd.

“I think he was chatting me up,” confided Rachel, her face slightly aghast at the prospect, “but I don't understand why he kept talking about his girlfriend.” I refrained from asking whether he'd mentioned what species his girlfriend was aligned with, and reminded her that her mad Belgian of the year previous had behaved in exactly the same way.

“That's true, you know,” she said in shocked recognition, but before we could ponder this imponderable any further, the Actionettes took the floor.

If you've ever seen the John Waters movie *Hairspray*, you'll have some idea of what the Actionettes are like. There are 12 of them, lined up variously in three or four rows, and they do synchronized dance moves to old Motown and R&B classics. It's not

high art, perhaps, but enormously entertaining.

Unfortunately, as is too often the case with someone of my years, it sets me off down Memory Lane. I'm back in 1966, in a grotty suburban basement in Downriver Detroit, hanging out with the Pompadour Gang.

I can't remember if anyone besides myself called them by that name, but it's how I'll always remember them. For those of you not fully versed in hairstyle lore, a pompadour consists of hair combed straight up above the forehead to as lofty an altitude as is possible within the constraints of gravity.

Originally popularized by a French noblewoman called Madame Pompadour, by the 1950s and 1960s it had become the province of young men wishing to display a certain distance from polite society. Elvis Presley had a sort of pompadour, but it tended to tumble in the middle into what was known as a waterfall. A really serious pompadour was more along the lines of what Little Richard sported: you'd have to put him out in a hurricane to have a chance of dislodging more than a couple hairs of that magnificent mane.

And that's the sort of hairdo the Pompadour Gang aspired to. To that end, several hours each day were devoted to applying coats of wax and gel. Of the group, Bruce Nickerson, tall and skinny as a rail, generally achieved top form, with his crowning glory adding a full five inches to his six-foot frame. Weekends were especially hectic: in addition to the normal hours spent in hair preparation and practicing the sort of line dances that the Actionettes were reviving 35 years on, there was serious shopping to do.

For that the Pompadour Gang headed downtown (this, of course, was in those halcyon years when Detroit still had a downtown) to Louis The Hatter. Louis The Hatter was the principal outfitter to Detroit's young black men and a handful of white wannabes like ourselves.

Stingy brim hats, double knit shirts, iridescent silk trousers in the gaudiest blues, golds, reds and oranges, nylon thick'n'thin socks in matching colors, patent leather wingtips and gold or silver 24-inch watch chains, Louis had it all, and incessantly advertised that fact on WCHB, Inkster (Inkster being a town developed by Henry Ford for his black workers; Ford reputedly thought that calling it "Inkster" was a hell of a good joke on the inhabitants).

WCHB was the "Sound of Soul," the station that most blacks and not a few whites turned to for the latest music at a time when Detroit was the undisputed center of black music in America. Of course the Pompadour Gang listened religiously. Bruce Nickerson, the palest and whitest of the group, regularly won call-in competitions on WCHB, and would shoot the breeze with the DJs in such a convincing patter that no one listening would ever suspect he wasn't black.

That would lead to confusion when he'd give his address to collect his prize, since at that time Detroit was rigidly segregated and anyone would know that Bruce's address was in an all-white neighborhood. I once watched him on the phone solemnly explaining to a bewildered WCHB staffer how he collected his mail at a suburban house where "my mama be the maid."

I myself was somewhat of a misfit in the Pompadour Gang. I had all the right clothes, true, and my pompadour was at least of middling quality. I couldn't do a convincing black accent, but neither could some of the other guys. My biggest shortcoming, though, was that I couldn't dance.

Wouldn't dance, more like it. At home I would play records and practice endlessly in front of the mirror, but I was terrified of trying out my prowess in front of the gang. These guys had been practicing their routines for years, and had mastered steps nearly as intricate as those of the Temptations or the Miracles. I, on the other hand, had spent the past couple years hanging around pool halls and candy stores with various thugs and hoodlums, most of whom were now in jail.

So I'd hang out and watch, and drink, and guzzle codeine-laced cough syrup, and pop amphetamine tablets and smoke endless cigarettes. The guys were kind enough not to ask why I never joined in their dance routines and the girls, of course, simply ignored me.

Every Friday and Saturday night we were off to the Chatterbox, the local teen nightclub. Sometimes the Chatterbox featured British Invasion-type bands, with their Beatle bangs and mod gear—I believe the MC-5, who themselves started out as a mod band, played there a few times—but when soul music was on the menu, we were in our element.

It was like the Harlem Apollo crossed with West Side Story. Most of the kids were there to dance and flirt, but off to the sides there'd be an air of menace, with old school greasers lining the walls, looking surly, and never letting their hands stray too far from pockets where you could be pretty sure lurked a knife, a pistol, or both.

Most of the fights happened outside, but one night there was a near-riot inside. Ironically, that was one of the few nights I actually danced, my inhibitions (and sense of balance) virtually abolished by a stomach-wrenching dose of codeine. The only thing that kept me upright was the other dancers, packed so tight on the floor that my lack of grace went almost unnoticed.

Apparently a bottle grazed my head and half the buttons were ripped from my shirt, but I never noticed a thing, I was so happy that I was finally dancing. When the boys told me later that I'd just stumbled my way through one of the worst brawls they'd ever seen, I thought they were making fun of me.

Times were changing, though, and the days of the Pompadour Gang were numbered. It was only a couple weeks later that I had my last big adventure with them. It had been a typical Saturday, hours of hair styling, dance practicing, and trying on clothes.

All day long we'd also been getting through a bottle of whiskey and loads of beer, so by the time we set out for the club, we were pretty well oblivious. Three of us piled into Bob's '62 Falcon, which he'd souped up by adding an engine as out of proportion to the car's size as our hairdos were to the size of our heads.

He took off down Allen Road, at that point a two-lane highway, and soon had it up to nearly 100 mph in a 25 mph zone. We

all thought it was hilarious until a car pulled out in front of us. It's a miracle that it even occurred to Bob to step on the brakes, but he did, so we were probably only going 50 by the time we broadsided the other car.

I blacked out for a bit; the next thing I knew, the cars had been towed away and the three of us were walking down the street, still determined to get to the club. Why the police hadn't taken Bob away for drunk driving, I'll never understand, but they hadn't. We made it to the club, about a mile away, and were surprised when everybody started asking what had happened to us.

A trip to the bathroom mirror explained why: there was more than a bit of blood on our faces, and our carefully constructed hairstyles were in total disarray. The blood was not such a big deal; after all, we could have been in a fight. But no self-respecting member of the Pompadour gang would appear in public with hair looking like ours.

We repaired the damage as best we could, then took a walk outside to drink some more. Not too far away was the police station, and in its yard we could see the wreckage of the car we'd been riding in. Its front end was totally caved in, of course, but more remarkable was the windshield, which had three distinct holes in it, each roughly the size of the tops of our heads.

None of us remembered anything about hitting the windshield, let alone almost going through it, but here was unmistakable evidence that we had. I suddenly realized, through an alcohol and codeine haze, that my head and neck hurt horribly. "How the hell did we manage to walk away from that?" I wondered out loud.

By way of answering, Danny patted his now-restored pompadour, looking as rock-solid as ever and gleaming black and shiny under the streetlight. "They don't make the windshield that could stand up to this hair," he gloated.

Back in London, back in the year 2000, the Actionettes had finished their set. I wanted to explain to the people at my table how it had reminded me of the old days, but the club had grown too noisy and drunken for anything more than shouted one-liners. A few feet away, a one-man reincarnation of the Pompadour Gang bumbled through a version of '60s soul dancing that would have gotten the stuffing kicked out of him if he'd tried it on back at the Chatterbox.

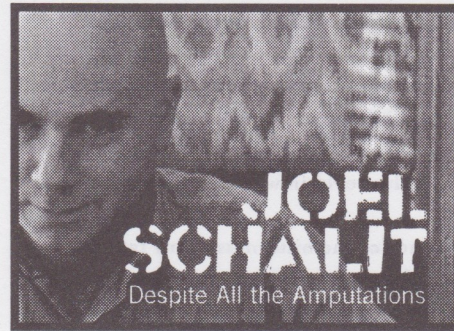
Some girl went into a lengthy and incomprehensible story which seemed to have something to do with her deciding not to commit suicide because of the music playing on the radio at the time. "It was as if they were reading my mind, no matter what problem I'd think of, the next song would have an answer to it."

She got up, a bit unsteadily, and started swaying to the music with all the grace of an ungainly walrus. I assumed she was finished talking to me. But a few minutes later, she shouted, "It's like that song, you know."

"What song?" I asked.

"Last Night A DJ Saved My Life."

"That's nothing," I replied. "Let me tell you about the time a pompadour saved mine."



Would you believe it Yoel," said my father's friend Danny as he showed me his wireless Palm Pilot. "All I have to do is turn it

on, and within seconds, here you go, the latest headlines from the *Wall Street Journal*."

"That's really cool," I replied, congratulating our family friend on his latest device. "You've got to appreciate the irony of this display of technology," I said, a shit-eating grin spreading over my amused looking face. "What's so funny?" replied Danny.

"Just look at those headlines," I nearly shouted in response. "They're all about Bush's growing lead. While I'd never consider a scene like this out of the ordinary for a business executive in the Bay Area, we're in the middle of Israel, not San Jose." Danny laughed, and said, "Come Yoel, your parents are waiting for you."

We'd just finished a long dinner at Danny and his wife Helene's house, a mile away from where my parents live, in an old port town built for the Romans by King Herod. Aptly named Caesarea, or "Caesarville," in tribute to Julius Caesar, Danny's revelation of his international connectivity was in a long tradition of globalization of which Caesarea has always had a part.

Founded as the first deep-sea port in the eastern Mediterranean, Caesarea was now home to a new class of Israeli high tech entrepreneurs, the kind for whom the country has been fondly dubbed "Eretz Internet," a million times over. Gently making sure to keep my father awake behind the steering wheel, on the way home I made sure to get him talking about how much economic importance high technology has assumed for the country.

"You cannot imagine what a transition has taken place here," said Elie as he drove his wife Ana's new Opel into the gated community where they now reside. "When I was a child, our goal was to become the agricultural center of the Middle East. Now that we've accomplished that, we can move on to electronics." I grinned at the contrast Elie was drawing between past and present.

I recalled the pride he used to take at showing off the proliferation of "Jaffa" stamped oranges in a London supermarket to me during the 1970s, demonstrating how much Israel had come to dominate European citrus imports. I told Elie how the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* had recently done something similar in running an article on an Israeli instant messaging impresario who was starting to challenge the hegemony of America Online's instant messenger software in the United States.

The article made sure to note the plethora of Israeli émigrés in the instant messaging business, pointing out that ICQ was also a native invention. "The Internet, and our experience at invent-

ing low-cost, mobile communications technologies are really helping Israel become a part of the outside world," Elie said as he pulled into his driveway, the muffled ring of my stepmother's cell phone coming from inside her purse. "It all comes from the training our people get in the military, which is more proof that it helps people move into the world in ways that have nothing to do with warfare."

I couldn't help but notice the bitterness of my father's remark. It was clear that the events that had overtaken the country the previous two weeks weighed heavily on his mind. Arabs from neighboring towns such as Faradis, as well as from coastal villages to the north, had blocked the old Haifa road for a number of hours, fighting with outnumbered rubber-bullet firing police from the quaint wine producing town of Zichron Ya'akaov just above.

"I heard about the Arab dentist's office getting fire-bombed in Orakiva," I responded as we walked inside, hoping to get my father talking with a reference to an instance of Jewish-instigated violence that had overtaken the immigrant town next door. "Ha'aretz had a piece on it a few days ago that we read in the online edition back in the 'States," I told him. "But it said nothing about the ethnicity of the dentist. We only found out last night that he was an Arab while we ate dinner at that new nouvelle cuisine restaurant in Zichron with your friend Avshav's son."

My father's tired eyes all of the sudden became more alert. Checking his fax machine to see if any important business memos had arrived from his office, Elie loosened his collar and responded, "You have to remember that one of the reservists who was mutilated in Ramallah was a Russian immigrant from Orakiva." My father proceeded to fall silent, shuffling the papers on his desk, trying to find something. It was the remote control to his television set.

As I started to formulate a reply, the eleven o'clock news came on. Gesturing with a finger to his lips that I was to remain silent, Elie scanned through several stations—Israeli, Arab, British and American. Nearly all of them featured the same interview with senior Palestinian Authority official Saeb Erekat, back juxtaposed against a video screen showing tracer fire arching over the Jerusalem suburb of Gilo. Erekat was making the PA's first appeal for the United Nations to send an international force to protect Palestinians from Israelis.

Listening to Erekat's request get repeated from station to station, we finally settled on an Israeli talk show, which I couldn't understand because my Hebrew was not good enough. "Abba, can you provide a translation?" I asked. My father held up his finger again, gesturing that I wait until a commercial break.

When it finally arrived, he said, "They were discussing what ingenious use the Palestinians have made of communications technology in getting their message to the outside world. In particular television, but most importantly, cellular telephones and the Internet."



This column is part 4 in a series about one of my trips in Europe. The last installment left me fresh off of a ferry from Sweden on tour with His Hero is Gone (Todd, Paul,

Yannick, and Carl) and Y (Thomas, Henrik, Matthias, and Hartmut) and two of Y's friends Jörn and Marian.

Tuesday 21 April, 1998 • Germany

We got to Bremen sometime around lunchtime and went to the squat His Hero is Gone had played at before. When we walked into the kitchen area Paul put his arm around Henrik and said with mockingly misty eyes and little sniffles, "This is where we spent our first morning together." Thomas and Jörn came back with two loaves of bread. Todd looked at them and said, "Only two things of bread?! One for me and one for who else?"

After a wonderful breakfast of bread and a million different spreads and pates we had to leave most of the Y boys behind and headed off to Hamburg. We found the street we were supposed to be on but turned the wrong way. In an attempt to turn around the block we ended up driving and making random turns for fifteen minutes. "Wait a minute. How the hell did we get lost here?" We finally made it to the apartment around 6 pm or so and were treated to the most intriguing meal of the tour so far. Burritos with fake mincemeat, onions, guacamole, marinated lettuce, hummous, and some kind of cinnamon flavor.

The show was at a practice space that was covered with graffiti. They were the only band playing; the promoters were going to show some kind of film beforehand. The practice room was tiny—no more than thirty people could probably fit in there. I set the merchandise up outside the room. All there was to set up on were some dresser drawers and a triangular board that was about twice as long which I haphazardly balanced on top. A half an hour went by. I was told something like the promoters couldn't find a VCR so His Hero is Gone was the sole happening that night. They didn't really play very well (I suppose that's relative—a bad night for them is above and beyond most bands' sets) but people swarmed the merchandise table after they were done. When Yannick saw how much they sold he shook his head and mumbled, "People are stupid."

For some bizarre reason we decided to go see Unwound who were playing at some club that was on the way back to Lars' apartment. They were, of course, dull as fuck but His Hero is Gone had played their second show with them so I guess they at least had a little bit of a reason to be there. Carl found these Burger King postcards that said in German, "Vote for the Whopper—the only candidate that will go through flames for you." Not soon enough,

a few of us went back to the apartment to relax. We were all feeling pretty drained from the long hours in the van so even the red light district couldn't tempt any of us to venture out for some night life.

Wednesday 22 April • Hamburg and Berlin, Germany

I love the breakfasts we've been getting with bread and every kind of spread imaginable (and some you would never be able to imagine) but eating junk all day every day is starting to take its toll. I checked my email which was quite odd because the keys on the keyboard were in different places. Paul played a set of acoustic glam metal numbers with the rest of us cheering him on and singing along while we waited for that mysterious something you're always waiting for on tour. Somehow the decision was made to go to a record store. We were running way late so when we saw a parking spot that was nowhere near big enough we just pulled in sideways and parked halfway on the sidewalk. Brilliant. The record store was a bit small and a little pricey so I only bought two LPs. About every fifteen minutes or so Todd would say, "OK guys, we really should think about leaving," before tackling a few more racks of records.

We thought we were going to be way late for the show but the food wasn't even ready by the time we got there. Paul gave me and Yannick much needed haircuts. It came out somehow that Henrik had been doing gymnastics for 11 years and that he'd even gone to LA for a competition. He stood on his hands for at least a full minute and gracefully landed on the ground in the splits in front of our gaping mouths and widening eyes. The game of rummy Carl and I started up was interrupted by the announcement of dinner. It was the first spicy meal of the tour that got me all excited.

Peace of Mind were stuck in a traffic jam and unfortunately, they had the backline. They finally showed up around 10 or so. They had left at 1 in the afternoon and what would normally have been a 5 hour drive took them 9. The show wasn't too memorable.

On the way out of the venue we heard a strange noise coming from the back of the van. Paul checked it out and discovered a nail stuck in the tire that was attached to a big hunk of plastic. He yanked it out and we continued on. A little while later we heard a loud clunk and felt the van shift. The tire was flat (of course). Amazingly enough we were across the street from Henrik's apartment. Paul and Jörn changed the flat and we managed to get to Thomas' around 3 am. We listened to the Y LP which was kind of cool after having heard all the songs live. I squeezed in between Todd and Carl on a large cushion on the floor and immediately fell asleep.

Thursday 23 April • Berlin and Potsdam, Germany

We woke up at a decent hour and lounged around listening to records until Thomas came home. A few hours later we walked to the Thought Crime World Headquarters and met his label partner Jens. Everybody traded a bunch of records and sat around listening to them. Since we had to meet Peace of Mind at 3:30 we pretty much didn't have time to do anything else.

We met up with Peace of Mind at a record store. I sat in a nearby part writing while everybody else got their fix. Thankfully a few people wanted to walk around so we set off on a rather boring trek past loads of storefronts and ended up in a small park where we sat for a few minutes and talked. I told Agga, the singer of Peace of Mind, that I was looking forward to touring with some females.

At 5 we headed back to the record store to meet up with Todd and Yannick. We all piled in the van and drove to the Peace of Mind vehicles. We were to follow them to Potsdam. After a half an hour I heard Todd's incredulous voice, "Hey, aren't we right by Thomas' apartment?" Ten minutes later my own voice broke the silence, "Isn't that the record store over there?" After a few circles around Berlin we finally managed to make it to Potsdam.

Everything in Potsdam was covered with graffiti. Buildings were crumbling. I thought it was beautiful looking. Carl and I tried to explore this wooded hill right behind the venue, Archiv, but unfortunately there was a fence all the way around it. Dinner was served around 9 and it was truly amazing! Pasta with soya chunks and vegetable sauce, potatoes, more pasta with peanut sauce, some sort of mustard based potato casserole, mock meatballs, bread and margarine spread mixed with fresh, chopped herbs, a fruit salad, and more that I can no longer remember. A frazzled Jörn came out to join us. "I just spent nine hours cooking for you guys." I went back to the table with my plate piled high. Carl shook his head. "We finally meet someone that eats as much as we do and it's a small girl." I looked around and noticed that the five of us had food overflowing our dishes while everybody else had just a normal plateful. We all went for seconds too. To think Jörn was with us for a whole week and we never knew what a master chef he was.

Ebola (the one from Germany) played a pretty good set but I was feeling super tired for some reason and just sat hunched by the merchandise. The audience was pitifully small — maybe thirty people. After the show we went to Jörn's squat, Boumann's. He warned us that there was no electricity. "How do you listen to all your records then?" came Todd's predictable question.

Friday 24 April • Potsdam and Cottbus, Germany

Jörn made us an amazing breakfast: hummous, baba ganoug, bread, loads of spreads, etc. Fuck, we're getting spoiled. I peered out of the front door of the squat and was startled to see an enormous fortress/gate looming over a shopping area to the left. It was obviously newly cleaned — so much so that it almost looked fake, a gleaming plastic-looking archway with a cafe in it. I went upstairs near where we had slept and looked out of the window onto the backyard while I was waiting for the bathroom to be vacant. There was music blaring from a small boombox. I saw the makeshift table consisting of boards and a dislocated door covered with spreads, crumbs, plates, and cups in glorious disarray, Todd and Yannick playing air instruments and probably arguing about whether the band was good or not, Carl and a dog chasing each

other around, and various clusters of people laughing and talking. I felt peaceful and content and in love with life.

We got the His Hero is Gone LPs on vinyl finally. The artwork had been changed a bit on the back of the "Fifteen Counts of Arson" LP because one of the song titles was missing on the original version and their address had changed. The newly added song title was a different color (white) and font than the rest and was completely off-center. The new address was also white. They had a pretty good laugh over that one. That reminded me of the time I was photocopying the Arma Contra Arma 7" inserts and realized after making 500 copies that part of the cut and pasted lyrics were folded over so you couldn't read them. When I apprehensively and shamefully pointed it out to my friend who was in the band he just shrugged and said, "That's punk rock for you."

I couldn't believe it when we arrived at the venue in Cottbus. It was a small one-story building tucked in the woods with a river running next to it. Nearby some people were playing water polo in a pool. Paul and I went to go check it out. Standing at the edge of the pool were two ducks watching the game as well. They looked like they were hanging out and talking just like we were. I left for a little while and when I came back Paul nudged me and whispered, "They're on some kind of mission." It took a while for what he said to register but then I saw the two ducks waddling in the grass together side by side, occasionally looking at each other the way people do when they're walking and having a conversation together.

Nobody seemed up for walking around so I headed off down a path by myself. About 25 yards up I spotted a really small snail valiantly making its way across the path. I hunkered down and watched it. I couldn't believe that people eat creatures like this with rubber-like feelers and traces of slime behind it. In the ten minutes that I was crouched down the snail moved no more than a foot and a half. I heard approaching footsteps and looked up. Jobst from Peace of Mind joined me in my observation of the snail. We saw a few people biking up the path so we decided to rescue the snail from an inevitable splattering. I picked it up, a little grossed out by the fact that the rocks touching it were stuck stuck to it, and set it in the grass next to the path.

Once the snail was out of harm's way Jobst and I, of like mind, headed up the path together. I can't even remember what we talked about but we strolled and chatted peacefully for quite a while. Next to the path were rows and rows of nicely kept gardens and little garden houses. Eventually we stumbled upon a wildlife preserve and caught a glimpse of some boars. As we neared the venue I saw Carl dragging some huge branches behind him, a strange sight if there ever was one. Everybody pitched in gathering wood and we sat around the small fire eating some kind of tomato-based rice and vegetable stew.

Thomas came out and chatted with me. I can't write our entire conversation down but as usual he said several things that made me think. He said that most Americans he had met so far were really arrogant and apathetic. One of the things he attributed

that and Americans' attitudes in general to was the fact that it has been over a hundred years since a war was fought on US soil. In contrast, everyone's parents and grandparents in Europe can still remember what it was like to live through a war. I remember thinking during the Gulf War how strange it was that the war did not affect my life at all except that gas prices went up. I could not (and still can't) imagine the US actually being attacked or bombed. He also said I was the first American he'd met to ever ask to learn a substantial amount of words in German. I gave myself a little pat on the back after that. Then the other Thomas came and sat next to me and we talked until Stalker started their set.

I actually had a few beers this night since I was feeling much better and since they were free. His Hero is Gone were totally amazing. It broke their streak of shows that they were embarrassed about. I could tell that it cheered them up and they were all in a goofy mood afterward. I wanted to stay there forever and just enjoy life but of course we had to leave pretty quickly. I fell asleep with a smile on my face.

To be continued...

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Somehow my last column never made it to Dan. It was sort of an interruption in the series, I suppose, because I was in Europe for a long time and didn't have this travel journal with me. I wrote a full-length article about the S26 IMF/World Bank protest in Prague, Czech Republic for Inside Front and a short blurb for what was supposed to have been part of my last column.

Unfortunately the whole event was very much under-publicized in the worldwide media and most people only know that *something* went down in Prague this fall. The IMF and World Bank held one of their meetings 26 September 2000 in Prague and thousands of us went to protest it. I had been waiting for months for the protest and was practically exploding with energy by the time the big day finally rolled around. Looking back on it now I feel lucky that I didn't get beaten up or arrested like so many of my friends did, especially considering that everywhere I went, things got out of control and exploded in violence. I was anticipating a bit of violence but wasn't really expecting to take part in it.

In the late morning/early afternoon the march I was on was greeted by a police blockade not far from the congress center where the IMF had begun their meetings earlier that day. Before I made my way up to the front, people had already started hurling miscellaneous objects (mostly rocks dug up from the cobblestone streets) at the police. I knew the shit was getting serious when I saw some molotov cocktails lobbed at them. The police were shitty, of course, with their tear gas, concussion grenades, and water cannons, but I really can't imagine something like this happening in the US without them opening fire. This battle continued on for about two and a half more hours until the police succeeded in pushing us back.

A few people ran around yelling about how we were going to surround the congress center so we trekked up a hill and somehow managed to reach it with no police interference, although I

read in the paper later that they were heavily guarding the whole area around it. After about 15-20 minutes the police swarmed down and attacked everybody mercilessly, pounding on anybody that was in their way. I spent the next 10 minutes running up/falling down hills, trying to escape the police. In the evening my comrades and I (composed of several Germans, two Americans, and one Canadian) headed to Wenceslas Square where people were supposedly surrounding the Opera, the location of the IMF/World Bank delegates' evening entertainment. What we found were smashed bank & McDonald's windows and a riot in full force. The police certainly were not holding back and they were tear-gassing the fuck out of everybody and beating up tourists. There were a few close calls with all of us but we managed to make it back to our rented apartment relatively safe apart from some huge bruises and bloody wounds.

The next day, four out of the seven of us that were left were arrested. They were in jail most of the day and made to stand spread-eagled against a cold wall for several hours. Of course they didn't get their phone call or any other such nods to their rights. But compared to what I heard later, my friends were lucky. Several other people I met later had bones broken by the police and then were denied medical attention. At least one woman was raped. I could go on and on about the fucked up stories I heard directly from the people they happened to.

The media compared us to football (soccer) hooligans and made ridiculous comments about the "pointless" violence. I always kind of waffled on the violence issue before although I do have to admit that the militant "peace police" at the A16 protest in DC had definitely grated on my nerves. However, now I can say that I truly believe that absolutely nothing could have been as effective in shutting down the meetings in Prague. We scared those motherfuckers shitless. They didn't end the meetings because they just "worked really fast and finished everything in a day and a half" like they claimed. Those assholes were terrified of the violence and wanted to get the fuck out of there. I wanted to dance with joy and kiss everyone around me when I found out that we had stopped the meetings. For the first time ever at a protest I felt like I had power, like we had power. Now I know that we can and *will* stop all the acronym-ed institutions that are force-feeding globalization to the entire world.

Like I said, this was a truncated version of what actually happened in Prague. I highly recommend everyone to check out Inside Front, put together by the wonderful Crimethinc. Collective, not only because it has the full article in it but also because it is just a flat-out amazing zine.

...

The incredible band Y from Berlin who I have been writing about in these past few columns is coming to tour in the US from late March to mid-April. Keep an eye out for them. I am booking their tour so you can contact me for information about it.

PO Box 2445 • Champaign, IL 61825 or kimbae1@yahoo.com



It's nice to be able to listen to national news and hear what the weather is going to be like tomorrow in your town. The

forecasts call for these bizarre European temperatures, numbers like negative sixteen which I know cannot occur in America because then all motion would cease even on a molecular level and the universe would implode. RE: the end of my previous column for this magazine, wherein I conjectured that when next you heard from me, "it'll hopefully be the desolate dead middle of a brutal and unforgiving winter, and I'll be catatonically depressed and sit around the apartment all day contemplating where my life went wrong." And, check it out, here it is and here I am. Getting up most days around 3 in the afternoon, I catch on average an hour of sunlight, spending the dark hours tuned into NPR, huddling in the kitchen, drinking coffee and listening to Midwestern blizzard reports, which then segue into the even colder and darker world of US national politics at the closing of the year 2000.

Today, as a foot of snow descends on north Western Avenue, the frat boy son of one of the most unspectacular presidents in American history is declared the new person authorized to instigate nuclear holocaust if he so chooses. The pivotal Supreme Court decision seems to hinge (and I've only been following the whole thing with half an ear as I make the coffee) on it being somehow too complicated to actually count the votes cast by the electorate to determine whether said frat boy should rightly be in that position. Even George W. Bush's handlers admit that he was a C student, explaining that "C is the average. The American people want an average guy, someone who understands their needs and concerns, not some intellectual egghead. Most Americans get C's. It's the statistical average grade." I can dig that. Plus, it being, like, too much of a hassle to count the votes is the kind of Supreme Court decision I'd probably make so I could adjourn and catch a matinee movie.

NPR, my only connection to the outside world (besides the *Chicago Tribune*, which arrives with an unsolicited clunk every morning on my doorstep even in weather conditions where dialing 911 gets you a recording that says "call back in spring"), continues with its early-afternoon apocalypse theme, reporting that people in Europe are worried about renewed outbreaks of "Mad Cow disease," an epidemic caused by feeding the brain stems of cows to cows. "Mad Cow" is one of the general nutritional hazards of cannibalism, although the cows who are being

forced to eat other cows aren't the ones complaining, it's the human beings doing the feeding who then freak out about their own folly and send out panicked AP wires which are turned into newsprint and clunked on my front door. Why not just feed the cows something besides the brain stems of their already killed brethren and avoid the coming apocalyptic plague? I picture an English farmer (who, in my mind's eye, I base on Nigel Tufnel in the film *Spinal Tap*), shrugging his shoulders, and saying "yes, well, but, we've *always* just fed them the brain stems. It's so much easier that way, you know." Again, the answer seems to boil down to the strange lethargic malaise that has gripped the human soul: despite impending Armageddon, doing anything to alter the course of destruction would involve "too much hassle."

"Mad Cow" evokes some pretty good end of the world imagery, but it can't beat the almost Biblical-sounding Tribune headline "Rivers of Blood Flow in Congo." I turn to the page where I am promised topographic maps of these "Rivers of Blood," but find, instead, in a bait-and-switch tactic typical of the paper, an interview with the Doobie Brothers. The Doobie Brothers are back on tour and surprised to find that, as their original fan base brings their kids and grandkids in increasing numbers, new forms of dance are being introduced at the Doobie concerts.

Chicago Tribun: Mosh pits?

Doobie Brothers (laughter): Sort of a yuppie mosh pit. You know, "hey man, don't rumple my suit."

And political leaders in Zaire, meanwhile, urges Zairian school-children to study the current US election in order to understand the mechanics of fraudulent elections. Zaire! Talking that way about us! Why, that country is right up by the rivers of blood!

NPR, meanwhile, has finished up the demoralizing news segment and moved on to music. They are bringing me a story about a jazz musician who had a brain aneurysm, and had all memory of how to play his instrument erased. "I'm talking, zip, baby," the NPR announcer explains, enamored of some kind of be-bop poet affectation whose origins I am too culturally stunted to be able to decode (hence my interest in getting more worldly by listening to NPR in the first place), "This cat was gone, man. He had to learn it all again from scratch-o. But," the announcer happily informs us before playing one of his newest recordings, "he's back up to speed." Wow. Now there is a piece of reportage which really inflames the imagination. Here is a man who, having doubtless spent years building a career on that most slender and tenuous of transactable commodities, musical ability, has to one day face beginning again from ground zero. Imagine this person deciding to re-learn his instrument, and think about what it says about his self-image, his fundamental conception of himself: does he recognize in himself an immutable quality, a genetic constant, some latent and abstract potential energy of ability just waiting to be turned kinetic again? In other words, does this jazz musician see in

himself the antithesis of George W. Bushism and millennial human malaise, not just a C average ability somehow thrust fleetingly into the limelight, but actual talent, ability, the potential of doing something "A+?"

One is moved to wonder. What would I do if a brain aneurysm erased all of my, ahem, talents? Assuming all my, well, you can't exactly call them marketable skills, so let's say abilities to do things which seem more legitimate to me in some way than selling insurance, were erased in a sudden aneurysmic episode—what would my reaction be? It's hard to imagine I'd have the fortitude of our jazz musician. I guess I'd go back and look at my pre-aneurysmic output and try to glean whether there was something there which seemed like better than C work, which indicated some level of talent or interesting things to say or something that seemed worth resuscitating.

However, it's doubtful that I would find such a kernel of validity in all my doings, since my immediate gut reaction to the NPR story is "I should fake a brain aneurysm to get out of writing that *Punk Planet* column." There would be something poetic and appealing about the post-aneurysmic persona. I'd probably enjoy going to parties a lot more if I had that up my sleeve as a conversational device: "Yeah, you know, I used to do all this weird stuff, I wrote for this magazine, played in a band, but one day I had a brain aneurysm and it all got erased. I looked into re-learning it all but then I saw an article in *Time* magazine that said punk was going back out of fashion, so I figured the whole thing was too much of a hassle. Now I'm an accountant. Why, what do you do?" People at the party would nod gravely at each other, having heard on NPR about that kind of thing happening to creative people sometimes.

When you think about it that way, I guess it's harder to be so incensed by the presidency of G.W. "shrubby" Bush. He seems completely unfit for office, an alcoholic and borderline retard, sure, but who amongst you, dear readers of this cutting edge periodical, will step forward and proclaim for yourselves "A+" status? I suppose I could be giving this jazz guy too much credit as well. It's equally possible that his whole thing is not a product of intense belief in his own worthiness, but rather ascribable to acclimation, that he had just gotten used to the lifestyle, the smoky clubs, the free drinks, the late-night hours, which peddling his tenuously teetering one-aneurysm-away-from-nothing talent provided him. Did the prospect of just shrugging his shoulders, chalking it up to fate and getting a job as an accountant seem in that context less appealing than learning to play an instrument again?

My upstairs neighbor is reading a book called *Jazz Masters of the 30's* by Rex Stuart. The book is actually a collection of columns Stuart had written in a music magazine in the 1950s, mostly recollecting his experiences on the New York club circuit in the 1920s and '30s, and, as my neighbor noted, "he can actually write really well, which is surprising, since most musicians are terrible

writers. Or at least," he quickly corrected himself, "most of the really great musicians from that time were. Now, I guess you've got lots of guys who, uh—"

"Kind of half-assedly write and half-assedly play music?" I offered.

"Yeah, pretty much," he agreed. "It's kind of depressing, huh? It seems people are so freaked out about being mediocre themselves these days that they demand total mediocrity out of all their musicians and writers. No one wants to see anything which they can't look at smugly and think 'I could do that.'"

Which summates, unfortunately, both the punk ethos and the appeal of Boys 2 Men, and even, more ominously, the argument for why this detestable frat boy is an acceptable choice for president. Humanity, what is going on? I can accept that things are going downhill because of malignant evil, but not just because of general laziness. Having the chromosomally-deficient emperor's son as the new emperor is classic decline-of-the-Roman-empire stuff, but can we at least feed some Christians to the lions or something? Tepid mosh pits at Doobie Brothers concerts just does not suffice as the over-the-top orgy of cultural hedonism which historically accompanies the decline of empires. The news is grim: It's negative sixteen degrees today and humanity is going out like a bad sit-com. No grand finale, no last-minute revelations and tying up of all the unrelated plot-lines, just cancellation due to lack of viewer interest.



rip it up.

jessica
hopper

We are here to
freak it

My truest
soul salvation and
right-on redemption
comes in
many forms. The
vast majority is

music related. Those break down into the usual: buying records, listening to records, making mix tapes, working with music, going to shows and dancing. I could use some new moves, (despite my patented rip it up) though "you are really only as good as yr dancing partner or as the music inspires you to be" is my excuse as of late. After a long week of emo meltdowns and too much business and not enough pleasure, I was more than ready to freak the scene at the !!! (aka Chck Chck Chck, Sacramento's finest 8 piece go-go band) Fireside Bowl late nite dance party. The rented smoke machine & "pro" light system was on hand for the enhancement of the party, legitimizing us, as if other punk kids had caught us doin' Da Butt, we could of played it off with an ironic smirk. But fuck that, and double fuck irony and fuck smirk and fuck excuses. Why?

Because, when you are in front of stage doin' The Cowboy and slappin' the ass of the short stack girl-wonder who won the dance contest at the Dismemberment Plan show this summer, who, right this hot second, is bent over, hands on knees, doing The Booty Clap and going "whoo-whoo" with the sort of conviction that would make most people think she'd been raised on the set of a Cash Money Records video (or at least in some French disco), but when you can freak it with that sort of abandon, you don't need excuses. I don't need excuses when Mz. Short Stack and I have synchronized our Spazzy Pony goes to Soul Train moves. You can't excuse what you can't deny. There is even some vaguely out of place white hat guy who is humping the back side of his lady date like he was trying to fuck her (now, there is a difference between dancing like you want to fuck someone and dancing like yr trying to fuck someone)—despite that this was likely a 180 from whatever bumpin' mall bar "'80s night" he usually he ignites with his presence, he could not and would not deny that he was slave to the rhythm and slave to the rhyme that is, was, and shall forever be known as the insidious and unfadeable !!! live show.

I looked around, at all 56 people there enjoying the show and thought, "these are my people." INDEED(!) *these are my people, and we are here to freak it*, to indulge in the most wicked deliverance from all things plain and evil. Us scrubs all, getting our legs humped by strangers and best friends and white-hatted frat party refugees, united by the gospel truth according to R Kelly—there's nothing wrong with a little bump n' grind. Something magical happened that night, our dirty punk rock bowling alley got crunk and the world felt awright.

Houston knows how to party

About 10 days ago, while scraping ice off my windshield with a Simple Minds record, I decided I wanted to go somewhere I had no use for mittens and have an adventure. Three days later, I deplaned at George Bush Airport in Houston, Texas. I had a map, info on museums and basic supplies, like the new Outkast CD and socks. I rented the finest Dodge Neon that my dollars could get me, and I was ready to rip it up. I went to Houston because Destiny's Child is from there, because the Weather Channel said it was going to be above 40 most days and because I didn't know anyone there. And because Houston recently passed LA up in the "race" for smoggiest city in America. Because, I too, excel at things most people wouldn't brag about, Houston and I have something in common.

On the plane, the Texas Ranger-man with the shiny badge laughed when I told him I was staying in the Montrose area—"They really believe in the first amendment over there." The lady with the happy/sad theater masks ring and frosted bangs weighed in with, "Yes, very...bohemian type area." What they meant was lotsa gay folks and museums. Or perhaps there were some unwashed hippie types and flag burnings I managed to

miss entirely. Texas is possibly the most normal place I have ever been, like a caricature of America. In spite of this, I felt like no matter how weird I acted or dressed or seemed to them, they, the people of Texas, treated me with the most grandma-style niceness, stopping short of perhaps wiping something off my face with a spat on kleenex. Even the old white lady with hair like an end of summer dandelion, with her orange lipstick and "y'all" selling me a small stack of postcards remarking upon the "fine view in Galveston" with some skanky, permed lady ass-up in the sand in tanned and glistening "mount me" splendor on them, even she seemed like she was just happy to see me so happy. This was the magic of Texas. No one was going to yell at me.

In Galveston, I turned off down some random dirt road to see if it got interesting at some point. I went about a half-mile before reaching a cul-de-sac. In the cul-de-sac sat one toast 88/89 Ford Aerostar mini van, door open, one dude in the driver's seat. The cul-de-sac was also home to several hundred copies of the Galveston area yellow pages and a bevy of broken appliances. About 50 feet ahead of us, there were a few small hills of more trash, like someone turned over a dumpster. There was an eight or nine year old boy with a rifle shooting at the trash piles. I pulled out my camera to take a picture of Texas' future, and out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that the mini van has re-arranged itself, now perched much closer to me, directly in line with my door, staring me down, Christine style. I played it off and took a picture of oil rigs beyond the horizon o' trash. I didn't want Trash Shooter Sr. to off me, leaving me to rot amongst spent shotgun shells and phone books. This scene was a little more typical of what I thought Texas was going to be like. Hot.

Another thing I learned on my trip is that Houston kids know how to party. The Hands Up Houston boys, who do the punk shows, and their posse of stellar scene glue kids managed to create the most infuckingsane, mo'tarded New Year's ever. It was beyond party, into the realm of calamity. Someone came up with the idea of "50 40's", where the first 50 people at the party got a 40 oz. of malt liquor, which was to be consumed, en masse at the stroke of midnight, along with some random ounce—making for 2001 blazing ounces of malt liquor. It was somewhere between drunken art happening and the Dre Day video. After some pestering, I commandeered the turntables from Ladies Choice, and assumed command of the booty bass 12"s and gave the people what I thought they needed, which was "Bombs Over Baghdad" and "Nobody Beats the Biz" (The unfadeable Bret Shirley does get credit as we did tag team DJ for a good long while and he tossed it up with some choice Jurassic 5 and New Order cuts). At about 1:30 am, there were still easily 50-70 people crammed into my hosts' apartment and the bands hadn't even started. The Faboulous Flying Guillatines took a spot in the corner and shit started getting broken. Scared I was

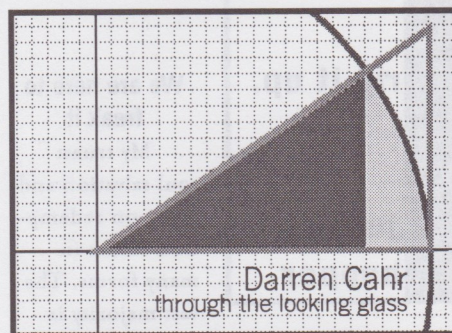
going to be accidentally slammed out the window, I escaped to a vantage point on top of the TV stand, cos I am kind of a pussy like that. Someone threw a 40 at the wall. It didn't break. The floor was slick with sweat and beer and no one could stand up too long, thusly the thrall of hot moves was peppered by domino effect hitting the floor. By the time ABCD, the dirty south's finest AC/DC cover band, hit their stride with Highway to Hell, there were foot prints on the ceiling, a hole in the wall, I was soaked in beer and what smelled like Boones Farm, and spitswap mania gave way to rabid dry humping in every dark corner and even on the microwave stand. It was like a nu-metal video, except the fat/phat dudes with chinstrap beards and giggling tit-tage had been replaced by goth cowgirls and art-school dropout superstars who danced like robot monkeys. I looked around, and I felt like this might have been the best show I'd ever seen, and that wasn't even including the bands. I looked around and thought, "These are my people." I hopped off the TV stand and onto the dance floor. I wasn't there to be a casual observer; I was there to freak it.

• • •

In rotation: Sonic Youth, *Daydream Nation*, Ludacris, Solesides *Greatest Bumps*, Eleventh Dream Day, Afro-Beat comps, !!!, Steely Dan & Sigur Ros.

P.S: New issue of *Hit it or Quit it* out in March.

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My brother spends his days searching for a doctor to amputate his perfectly healthy hand. My sister runs a day-care center while

operating a lab for synthesizing methamphetamines. A cousin of mine was recently arrested for biting the legs of live cattle and (if the news reports can be believed) drinking their blood. For obvious reasons, I feel exceptionally normal today.

In fact, I feel as though I live on an island of normalcy in raging sea of psychosis and silliness. People have become unglued in this strange, post-millennial world, abandoning their search for meaning and embracing their inner loon.

The starcruisers have been busy, absconding with the boring patriarchs of middle America and replacing them with oleaginous men, full of simpering id and sputtering adrenaline. Our matrons, in housecoats and slippers, have been transformed into cat-microwaving, Dworkin-esque oracles, cranks predicting

doom for our world and our species while wearing overalls and cowboy boots.

Our new president is a moldy bit of cheese from the ancient refrigerator of Allen Dulles, still hoping the CIA will absolve him of responsibility for the death of Che Guevara. Men ride through the streets on horseback, naked except for a silver codpiece, emblazoned with the insignia of Fortune 500 companies where they work while ignoring their children. Young people run madly in the streets, in the gutters, hoping desperately to be noticed while their hormones waft through the air like a haze, like smog, obscuring the skyline with the moist heat of their lust, their lust for designer goods and fast food and each other, in that order.

They listen to music manufactured by third-world labor pretending to be rock stars, who are merely the public face of talented 9 year-olds from Thailand who really are the Backstreet Boys.

Your parents read the Kama Sutra, oblivious to the nose rings and genital piercings of their contemporaries. They move the folds of their fat to enter each other while congratulating themselves on being true to their roots in the counterculture, washing their overabundant bodies in Body Shop hemp soap and singing songs from the nearest classic rock station in the shower and in the car. They subsist on food purchased at Whole Foods while seeking to commodify their dissent by purchasing Sony products, so as to register their aesthetics with the proper authorities.

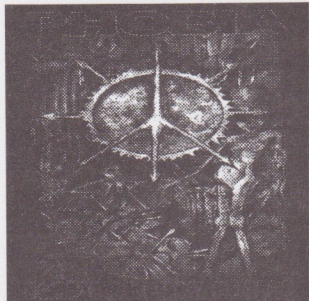
They dream of being 17 again with the middle-aged wisdom they have now accumulated, knowing now how they would purchase condoms and live, really live, in a time when there wasn't nearly as much to worry about. Or at least it seems that way in retrospect. They would have swingers clubs, and start bands, and invent musical movements years ahead of their time, and make money, thousands of millions of dollars, which they would use to cure hunger, or something.

But you, driving through the streets of your suburbs in your blue hair, in your spikes, in your leather, you are the forgotten one, the stable one. You have wisdom beyond your years from listening to Blink 182 repeatedly until the production values have begun to spill from your every orifice. You don't see meaning in anything, and you want to die, and you want to get laid, and you want to create something important and get not iced.

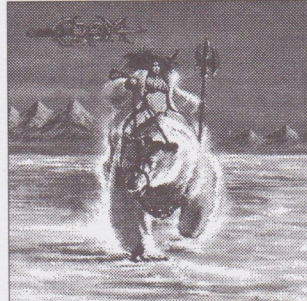
And me, I want to get some sleep. I've been tormented by dreams, dreams where my friends turn into Costa Rican tree frogs, dreams where little girls and little boys are impaled on giant redwood trees like game while squirrels laugh and pelt me with nuts. I am not crazy. I recognize what this all means, and I hope to god that I am permitted one last meal before the end of the world, or my execution at the hands of wheelchair-bound midgets from Bulgaria, whichever comes first.

The end is near. Be afraid, be very afraid. ©

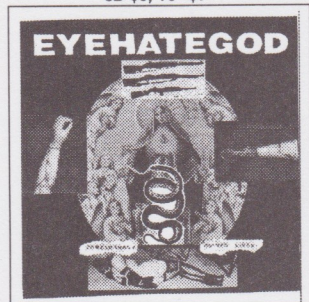
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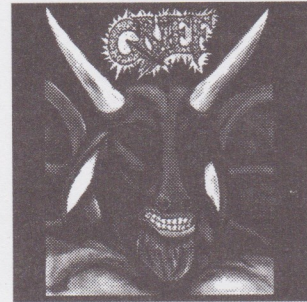
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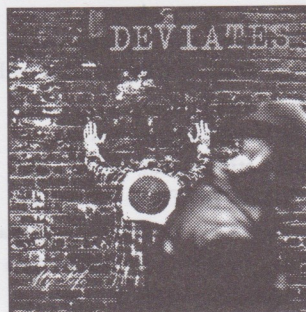


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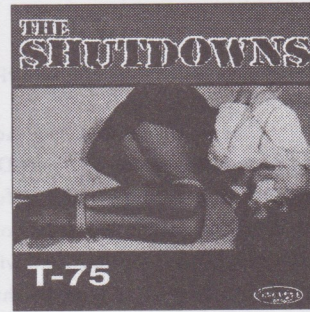
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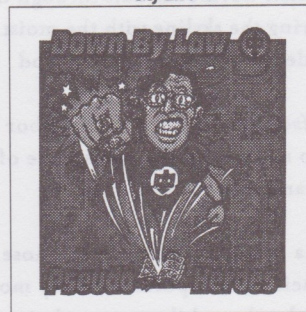
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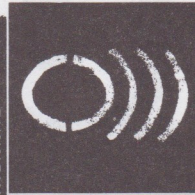
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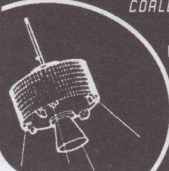
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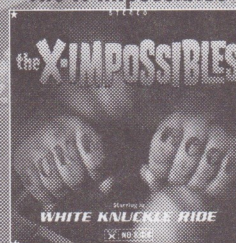
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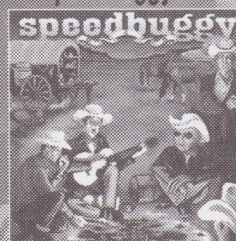


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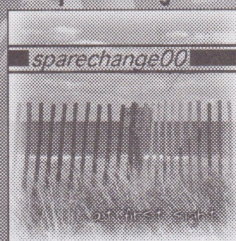


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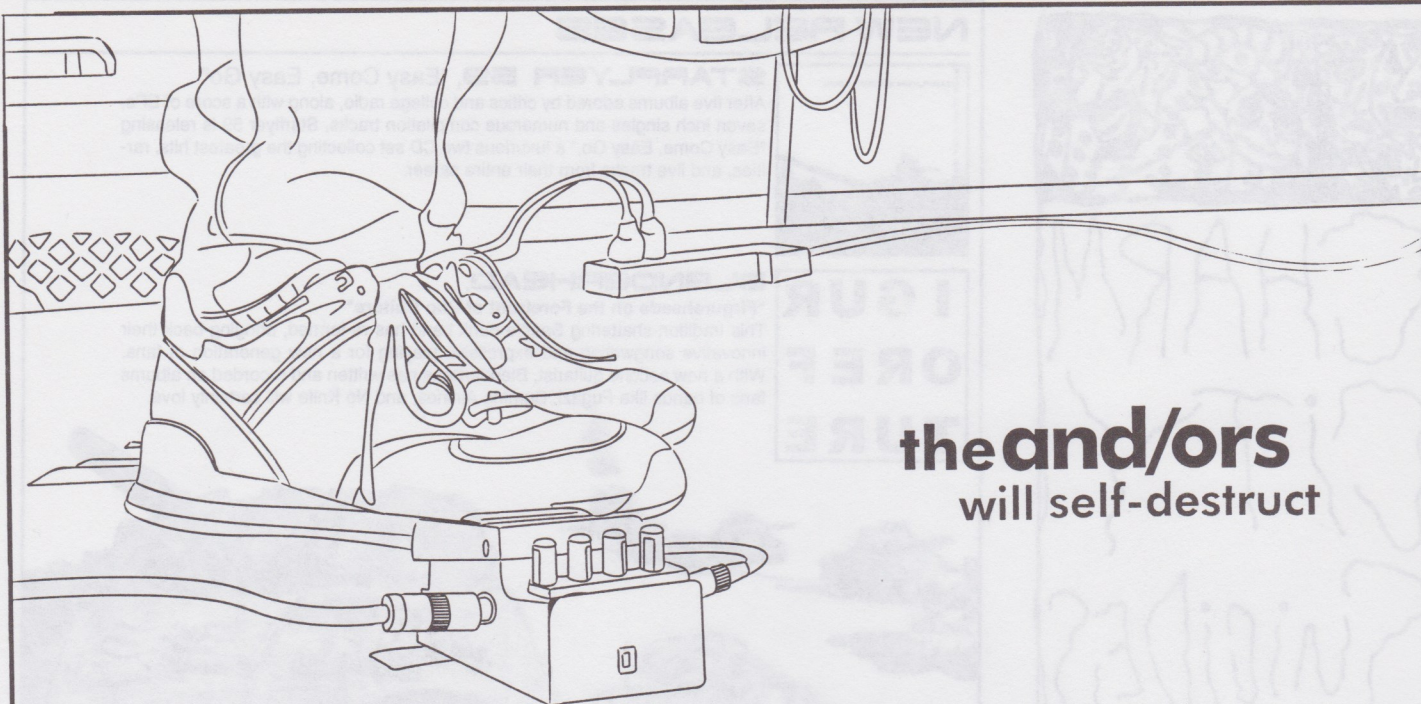
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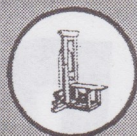
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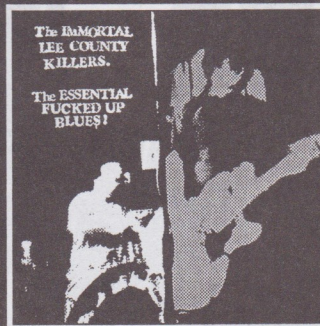
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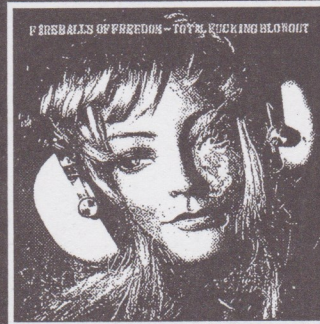
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The first time I had my writing printed in *Punk Planet* was a letter I had written defending the honor of Amphetamine Reptile records, after they had come under a bit of attack in the "All Punk Cons" article [PP17]. And here, almost five years later, I have the extreme privilege to help elucidate the story of the label and the people that influenced my formative years as I discovered punk music for the same magazine.

When I was 15, some folks at Am Rep took pity on me and let me be an intern. Over the next few years of working with them and observing, I learned pretty much everything I would ever need to know about how to run an independent music business and do so in a way that honors the art you work with and your own fandom. I also learned how to shoot a gun, but, alas, that's a story for another time.

Unfortunately, there won't be many more Am Rep stories for young interns to tell, as after 15 years, founder Tom Hazelmeyer has decided to let the legacy of Am Rep speak for itself and fold the label. But before doing that, he sat down to talk with me about the long and storied history of Amphetamine Reptile records.

Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

Lets start at the beginning. How did Am Rep start? How did you get into music? Were you in a band?

The label itself started in late '85. Our first release was the Halo of Flies stuff...

And were you in the Navy?

[laughs] You're funny. You are only getting away with that because you're not here. I had done some label stuff—starting Reflex records with Hüsker Dü in '82 or '83—before I went into the Marine Corps. Because I knew how to do that stuff, when Halo Of Flies started happening, I just started putting out my own stuff. I had sent out demos to Homestead, Touch and Go, and SST—those were the big three labels in the mid-'80s—and gotten little response.

So when you decided to put out your band's stuff yourself, did you call anyone and ask them how to put out a record?

No, we picked it up as we went along. The most help was Peter Davis [*Your Flesh* magazine] who helped me find out where to press records. I sent off the tapes and made the covers on a xerox machine. When I was in the Marine Corps, I worked in the machine shop and I made a little single-sleeve folding device. We did everything backward-ass. I remember the first time we did color sleeves, the guys at the print shop laughed at us because we gave them two pieces of paper, one with all the red stuff, one with the black. I had matched 'em up by holding them up to the light. They said, "These aren't color separations!" But it totally worked. That's how things worked the first few years.

So you figured it all out. When did you go beyond just releasing Halo of Flies stuff?

Originally it was just a vanity thing, but we bumped things up a bit, so that it looked like something was happening—hoping people might pay more attention. There was no intention of it being a label, we did three Halo singles in a year. Peter Davis really helped us out and put those singles in the hands of key people, like Gerard Cosloy and Byron Coley—they were ravin' 'em up. It was much easier to sell through 500 singles when the East Coast underground mafia gives you the thumbs up. ¶ At the time, I was still in the Marine Corps in Seattle, hanging out with Steve Turner and Mark Arm a lot. They played me tapes of Thrown Ups stuff they were doing, which I thought was amazing. I did some singles for them, then more Halos singles, then the next thing I did was with the U-Men.

Were more things starting to happen—those bands were pretty well known at that time weren't they?

No, the Thrown Ups weren't. The early Halo stuff had been so limited that people were really scoopin' 'em up fast now. They were known, but...

What were you thinking as far as this turning into something more than a hobby? Were you inspired by other labels at all?

I was doing it because I was an insane music fan and also a collector. I was never into the baseball card school of collecting, the "Oh I need the 5th edition purple vinyl Misfits album," but I loved music and singles so much that making them was just a total high. It was about how much I liked the U-Men, not how much money I could make if I sold 500 singles. Eventually, I could do two singles at a time. I was really inspired at the time by Dischord and also Touch and Go.

Did you know those people?

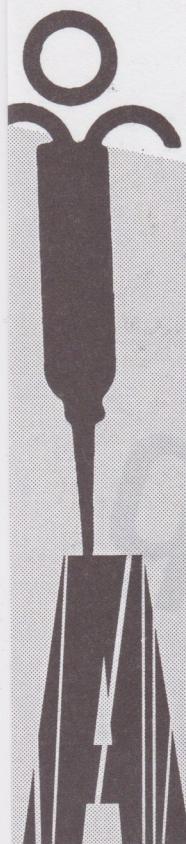
No, not at all. But I don't know how you could not be 18, into punk and not be buying up SOA and Minor Threat singles at the time. And also, they were the kings of packaging. The packaging looked like the '77 UK punk stuff—not homemade. Music came first, but you look back at those early Sex Pistols singles and they are these awesome little art objects. I was trying to emulate people on that level, and getting a unified thing going with the label.

At what point did you move from releasing singles to albums?

Twin Tone offered me a spot with them around '87. I had been back in Minneapolis for maybe a year then and the label wasn't full time yet. I was working as a security guard in a parking ramp, and would pop the trunk and stuff singles while I was securing. Halos had signed up to do an album with Twin Tone, and I was cranking out singles and had started doing 12"s with the God Bullies and Surgery. I also started getting tapes from bands. Twin Tone noticed the attention Am Rep was getting and offered us a manufacturing and distribution deal.

Was that common at the point?

No, not at all, I think it was Paul Stark emulating what bigger labels seemed to do. That's what a label like Virgin would



Amphetamine

do—that didn't happen in indie land. Back then there was no rules and no structure. Twin Tone was at their peak—they had Soul Asylum and the Replacements—and they had their shit together. With the Twin Tone deal, I went full time and I started doing stuff with Tar and the Cows. Previous to that, I never thought it could be a full time thing. That was never the aim. But somehow there I was working 10 hours a day—the label was my job.

And you were into it.

No. Actually I totally missed hanging out in the parking ramp in 20 below weather. It was hard to turn my back on it. [laughs] Actually I turned my back on that job when I was chasing this huge guy who'd been breaking into cars through the ramp. I stopped and said, "They pay me 5 bucks an hour. Fuck this, why do I care he broke into someone's Mercedes?"

When you hooked up with Twin Tone, did you think that you'd "made it"?

That feeling never really hit. I don't know how I could feel that unless I achieved every goal I set out for.

How were things on the business end? With so many new bands, were you doing contracts?

With singles, it was hand shake. Luckily, when I started doing albums, Paul Stark said, "You should have a contract." The indie cred thing was to do everything on a handshake, but A) Bands won't remember what you said when you had the handshake, which is true as hell; and B) it's not because you distrust the band or vice versa, it about when someone comes around waving big money and all you have is a handshake, you're fucked. Back then everyone was anti-contract and I was like, wait a minute, I am just protecting myself. I am not going to bust my balls for three years helping a band and when they run off to Warner Brothers, I am left there holdin' myself. That never happened to me because I had contracts. There's a reason that over thousands of years of business transactions, the contract

has evolved. The contracts I used were just one or two pages long, saying we will make four records together, here's what you get paid and when you get paid, but it really helped. There never came a time where I had to open the drawer up and throw the contract in their faces, but it did cover us when stuff started happening with Helmet with dick swingin' A&R agents started running around throwing figures in their face. We were protected.

What were the bands that were helping grow the label at the time? Or were you growing with every release?

Up until Helmet, everyone was pretty much even. There were bands that made us money, bands that broke even and bands that lost money. It was a weird family—all the bands toured together. Peter [Davis] was really integral in building that structure too, because at that point in time, there wasn't a tour network to speak of, there weren't really punk rock booking agents, there was nothing. It was just a handful of people who were sniffing out clubs and halls in places like backwoods North Carolina that made shit happen. When you would set up your own stuff through the limited system that did exist, you would go to Austin and then you are there for two weeks until your next show, which would be in Buffalo. ¶ The overall vibe at that point for us was the Cows, Tar, and the God Bullies kickin' around, building stuff up in their town and they were happy to go out and play for \$100 night for a month. That was almost unheard of, unless you broke punk rock gold and sold over 20,000 records.

What were you selling on average then?

Our average LP was selling 2,500 to 3,000 copies.

Was that CDs and LPs and cassettes or what?

That was vinyl and cassette only. That was right at the beginning of CDs—they were too expensive. But the pricing on CDs eventually came down. The first CD we did was a Helios Creed album.

Were you doing everything yourself still?

Yeah, direct sales and mailorder and everything. At that point I hired Mike Wolfe from a college radio station here. Once he had his hands full, we brought on Pat Dwyer, who worked at a record store and was one of the guys that would buy from us. Back then, we would go from store to store and try and get the local stores to take stuff on consignment. What endeared me to Pat is that since they wouldn't do consignment, he would buy 10 singles and sell them over the counter himself.

So at this point, you have two people working for you, a booking agent taking care of the bands, some bands that are working hard . . .

And that's when things started go nutty. Pinpointing exactly what and where and when things really started to take off is nigh impossible. It was a blur of activity, starting in about '90, when Helmet's *Strap it On* came out. In '91 they moved on to the major label world, which we were grateful for. Two-thirds of our day was Helmet. We were not Am Rep, we were "the Helmet label."

But Helmet wasn't the only band that the label was getting known for though.

No, Boss Hog was before that. They were riding the high of Pussy Galore still, so that was a given. The *Dope, Guns, and Fucking* series was doing really well too.

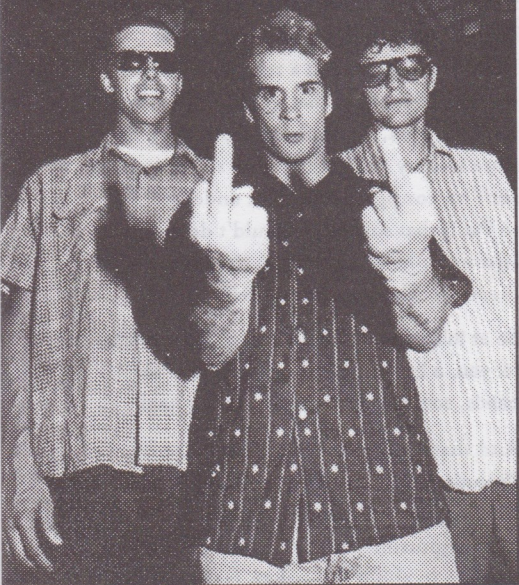
What did "really well" consist of in 1990?

Anything over 5,000 copies was amazing. At that point, it was still a really limited network and you had to bust your balls to do anything over 3,000. And not to sound like "we created everything" but while SST and Dischord bands had laid groundwork, we had bands that would work—they were some of the first bands to show up in these out of the way places and town. Not that other people weren't trying to build that same network, but the work the Minutemen and Black Flag did hadn't gelled into a defined thing really, it was just groundwork.

You can only do something you love this much with that much intensity with sometimes negligible results for so long.

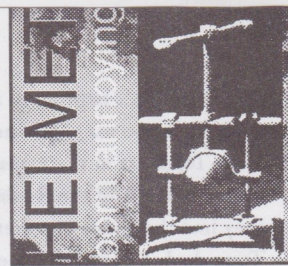
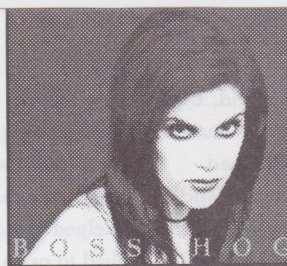
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HAMMERHEAD, MID '90S



Also about this time, some other labels were starting to do similar things—labels like Matador and Sub Pop.

I knew about Sub Pop, because of being out in Seattle and knowing about their first singles. I remember around this time talking to Chris Lombardi [Matador records] about how he wanted to put out his first single . . . Gerard [Cosloy, later of Matador as well] hadn't even left Homestead at that point. But things were starting to gel, starting to form more of a scene. We used to talk about that in the office, about how people were striving to create a tour network and fanzine network and all this because there *was* nothing else. There was Bon Jovi on the radio; the odds of seeing anything you liked on MTV was none to zero. That was a huge motivator for the bands, and everyone involved. The whole reason they started calling it "alternative" is because there *wasn't* one [laughs]. It was hair bands or nothing. The baby boomers were firmly in charge of the radio; MTV was all Whitney Houston and Bon Jovi; and there was no national magazine that would touch what any of us were doing. *Rolling Stone* was putting Paul Simon on the cover! We weren't relevant. Our motivation to make something happen because back then *everything* sucked shit. A



lot of people have no idea how miserable it was back then. That mutant kid living in suburbia wanting something different, had to go into the city, find the record store or the hole in the wall club that would actually host something bizarre like a punk band . . .

Or find MRR to mailorder stuff

At the time, everyone religiously advertised in *MRR* because it was nationally distributed and affordable. Whether you cared for their ideology or the 1-2-3-4 hardcore stuff they were promoting, you had to advertise because that was the only way mutant kids in Omaha were going to find out about what you were putting out. Back then they had people like [Mike] Lavella [*Gearhead* magazine publisher] writing for them. He would write up stuff like *Drunks with Guns* or *Killdozer* and had broad tastes.

It seems like everyone's growth and development as both businesses and as a scene depended on each other. You were all inextricably linked.

It was showing up in our work too. Take Frank Kozik: I started incorporating elements of what Frank was doing in his posters into things we were doing, then later when I met him, he said that he started doing some of the things he was doing because of things he saw us doing. It was weird and incestuous, everything was tied together and we were all influencing each other.

This is about the the same time as the founding of Am Rep studios, too. And you started doing your own screen printing in-house as well. Was all this necessary business-wise?

It was much more about wanting to have the neat little clubhouse where we could crank out anything. At that time, recording was always the problem. Trying to find cheap, decent-sounding places was impossible—people were always bouncing from

one basement eight track to another. [Tim] Mac [Halo of Flies bassist and the man who recorded most every Minneapolis band of note for many years] built our studio from scratch, but it never really panned out the way I wanted it to. It was a much higher quality studio than what we charged for it and I always wanted bands to realize that and utilize it. But I never fully grasped the band psyche of "nothing is ever good enough." It didn't pan out how I would of liked, but when I look back and some of the records bands recorded down there with Mac it was the best shit they ever did. They would run off and use another studio that cost four times as much and come back with a record that sounded nowhere near as good.

Building a studio, buying a building . . . none of that's cheap stuff. How was that growth funded?

Interscope buying out the Helmet contract is what got us out of Twin Tone and bought us our building. I have read things in print about how we got two million dollars—we got \$75,000, which was—and still is—a good chunk of money. At that point in time, real estate was dirt cheap in town, and the building we bought was abandoned and in a terrible neighborhood, so \$75,000 was more than enough.

Helmet was among the first wave of popular bands to move from the underground to majors. What was that time like?

At that point things got weird. Helmet would roll into town and we'd go someplace like 7th Street Entry to see them and there would literally be people wearing *spandex*. People were wondering what the fuck *those* people were doing in our little cloistered community. You could have walked down the street yelling out band names and never find someone who knew who Killdozer was, and now all of a sudden the real world poked its head into that world.

I'll be the first one to tell you how excited I was when some PC person would walk in and I was wearing my NRA T-shirt.



Very specifically, it was *your* world, because Helmet really set a ball rolling. It cracks me up, now to see these bands like Korn and Papa Roach—that whole slew of chugga chugga thug metal and think that it started with Helmet.

Yeah, you can watch the bands they influenced influencing the next wave which influenced the next wave and now look where we are at! They completely forgot where it started from. But music in general evolves that way. I remember when Helmet were getting tagged as Big Black wannabes.

Did you ever feel caught up in the indie, “no sell out,” dogma as all this stuff started happening for Helmet?

Actually, on one level, we were glad to see them go, because their success made things so hectic for us, but they were totally family to us, and they were the only band that broke like that for us. But at the same time we had 10 other bands on the label who we loved as much as Helmet and every phone call was Helmet. They needed someone bigger than us. As far as the “indie cred” circle goes, I never bought into the whole “sellout” thing. The problem was that battle lines were drawn between indie and major. I personally never had that anti-major thing because the first records I bought were Sex Pistols on Warner Brothers, The Clash on CBS . . . Vibrator and Devo was *all* major label. I thought people always misplaced *why* these labels were evil. They weren't sitting around plotting about how they are going to take bands away from us. I wasn't towing the line of major labels as the enemy. It like, they are just a machine, and they *will* stomp you into the dirt but the reason they are stomping you into the dirt isn't some kind of plot, it's more like Godzilla walkin' through the city: he has no idea you're under his foot. That was part of the reason we had contracts—majors aren't about being unified by aesthetics and per-

sonal loyalty, they want whatever is going to grease the machine. Majors had starts and stops in the world of punk rock continuously since '75 when they jumped into New York, then it was '77 London, then the mid-'80s REM/Hüsker Dü thing, and they lost their asses most of the time. A lot of major label people had been burned by punk rock, and were really skeptical, but Nirvana came along and they all jumped with reckless abandon into having bidding wars on bands that didn't matter.

But it was around this time that Atlantic came calling, not for a band on your label, but the label itself. Was the interest in the label because of Helmet?

Absolutely, all those labels understand is numbers, so to have something come out of our world and produce numbers garnered us a lot of attention. But the only reason we ever took it seriously was when Janet [Billig] became the VP at Atlantic.

How did that deal go down?

To the outside world, I know what it looked like, but it's hard to explain what it like to jump ship when who we were jumping ship to wasn't some suit, but someone who literally drove you around in a shitty van on your first East Coast tour. Previously, Janet was at Caroline and had liked what we were doing. When Halo of Flies went on tour, she was the one that got us a van and drove us around to our shows. Three smelly guys, some other folks, and Janet. That has more to do with me signing up with a major than, you know, bigger distribution.

At that point, you were distributed through Mordam.

Yeah.

Had you hit any sort of a wall as far as distribution? That was a really popular claim for people signing back then.

No. There are things you can say about Mordam that you could *never* say about the

rest of the distribution or punk world: Every month, that check landed on my desk; every month, no one else even came close. Our only frustration with them was that it was two really different worlds butting heads. Our approaches to politics were different. We were a lot more libertarian and laissez faire and they were Berkley school of punk rock Stalinism. I don't mean that to come of as much of slam as it sounds like, but that's what it felt like to us. Ultimately though, it came down to punk rock. Their salespeople were way more into Mr Bungle or punk pop than, the Cows. Us leaving Mordam had way, way, way more to do with what we wanted to do with Atlantic than *anything* to do with Mordam. I think Mordam was circumspect of us from the get go because we had a reputation as a homophobic Midwestern redneck boys club.

Let's talk about that reputation and where that stemmed from...

I think it stemmed from the fact that we were racist homophobes [laughs]. I really don't know where it came from. I have an idea though: We *did* promote that we were drunk, dumbass, Midwesterners and would wear that on our sleeves. I'll be the first one to tell you how excited I was when some PC person would walk in and I was wearing my NRA T-shirt. Obviously, that rubbed the PC element—which was very strong at the time—very much the wrong way and I was surprised how far they would take it. The fact that I actually believe in the second amendment—as well as the first amendment [laughs]—got extrapolated into we must be lynching people on the weekends. It was like, *what the fuck are you talking about?!*

How did you feel about that reputation?

I realized there was very little I could do about it. It was a double edged sword. Initially it was great—it helped us carve out an identity. No one *ever* toyed with the racist aspect of that, but you know I am



Our approach to it—and many of the people we worked with were of the same mindset—was that we're into fucking rock.

not going to deny we all loved to drink, we liked cars, we liked guns and we like being rowdy. But those things and racist red-necks are inextricably linked. I mean I suppose I might be the same way if some label popped up in Berkley that was into macrobiotic eating and candles and all the sudden you find out they are Republicans. I might be guilty of extrapolating and concluding on what they *think* based on what they *put out*. Our approach to it—and many of the people we worked with were of the same mindset—was that we're into fucking rock. And rock is politics and promoting a lifestyle. It's about raw power and fucking blurting it out. It's not a controlled, thorough thought process. If you want that, go to college and become a philosophy major. We're about getting drunk and havin' a good fuckin' time.

I remember sometimes people would give me a curious look when I said I was working at Am Rep.

"What they actually let a girl in the door?!"

Your intern was a riot girl, Tim Mac was gay and no one ever beat us up in the parking lot.

"Drag the chick and the fag outside, it's time to kick 'em around a bit, we have a reputation to uphold!" That right there is the stuff that would *always* get me in trouble. Nothing is sacred in the context of a joke. With someone who understand my sense of humor I will say that, but it doesn't mean that my brother and I are out cruising Loring Park in a pick up with baseball bats gay bashing guys. I couldn't care less, but no one *ever* looked into that. ¶ To expand on that, here we were getting stuff done, releasing things regularly, doing graphics, recording, and doing almost *everything* internally. We were operating like a commune, especially with the level of non-jealousy and support for each other, even though our lifestyles were the furthest away from hippie commune as it gets. ¶ But we were a boys club, because

well, that's who came through the door. I didn't give a shit. Janet was one of the most insanely talented people at doing her job that I'd ever met. If Janet was to knock on my door and I was to refuse her based on the fact that she was a woman, I'd be fucking retarded. But for whatever reason, nine out of ten times, the folks knocking at the door was some guy who was the college DJ. That might have to do with the fact that everything we put out was hugely aggressive, testosterone-riddled music.

Let's get back to Atlantic and Janet: Did she just step up to you and say "Come with me and I will take care of you?"

In a nutshell, yeah. She thought we might benefit from what they had to offer. At the time we had maxed out what we could do in that world, and I was willing to try something new. Plus some of the bands were getting frustrated because on their third record they were selling exactly the same amount as their first. So I figured maybe this time we would try sending out 400 promos and taking out major advertising and all sorts of "acting like the big boys" schtick. And so that happened and we discovered it made no fucking difference whatsoever. [laughs]

Were there *any* perks to signing, or was it just a hassle?

The perks was that pay checks were waiting for everyone at the end of the week, as opposed having six months of great cash flow and six months of starvation, like any small business. But right after Janet brought us on, there were some weird shakeups, and I never paid attention to that world or their politics, but because of that, Am Rep got shoved off in some weird side room. We were only with Atlantic for 11 months and we never spoke to anyone there more than half a dozen times. They sent the checks and we did the same stuff we were always doing, just more of it. [laughs] It was like someone in accounting poked around and were like, "wait a

minute, who are these people over here . . . Ampheta-what? Why are we sending these checks to Minneapolis?" Janet left Atlantic prior to the end of our 11 months.

So you were kind of left without an advocate there.

Well out of the gate, we had tried some stuff with Supernova, who everyone there was really into. We tried to push them through, but we didn't understand how that world works—I *still* don't. We aren't the kind of people who can walk into a major and motivate people and kick the right asses, we were just a buncha dumb rednecks. We weren't set up to play that game and we got crammed into a bureaucratic basement.

When you split did you get anything out of it? Did they buy you out of the remaining contract?

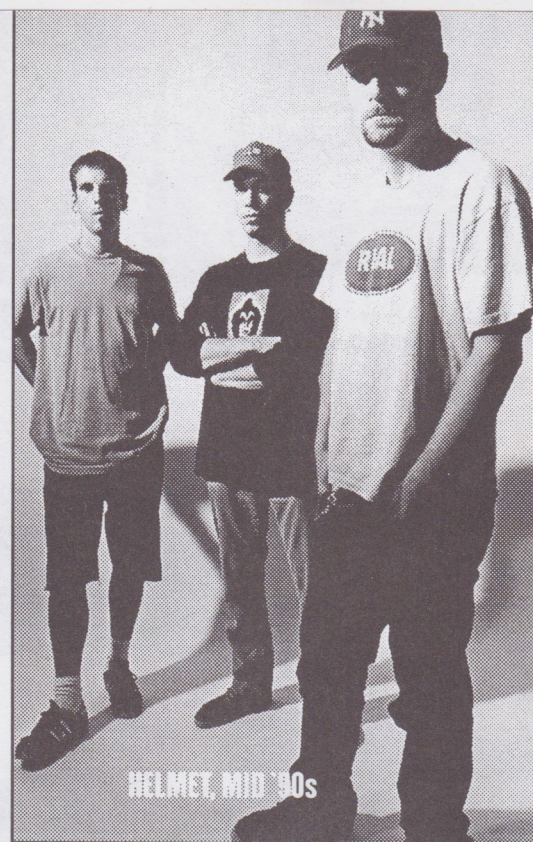
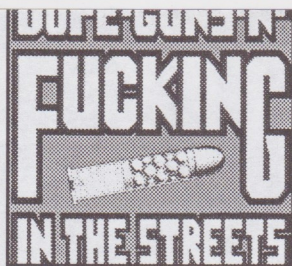
Can't talk about it. "We found agreeable terms in which to separate our relationship." [laughs]

Were you bummed about this?

At that point, it really had no impact on us. Because of Atlantic we had tape, and boxes and postage. The bills got paid and the records showed up when they were supposed to and so we were stoked. It didn't impact us except economically, and that was for the better. We were never chaffing under the lack of attention paid to us, because we really didn't give a fuck. Is that what you were asking?

Well, I guess I'm wondering if you were put off by having to jump through hoops? Did that experience change you? Did moving from one world to the other change the way you felt about all of it?

I definitely think my interest was waning—that started to happen about then. It was burnout coming from 100% believing in bands and busting your balls only to have nothing happen. Sure they go on to influence a generation of bands, but as far as



the bands being happy with the results, or you being happy with it, it wasn't there.

And also about this time, there was a mass exodus from the indies. A lot of bands were signing to majors and defining that as success, as opposed to when you started, going on a three week tour was success.

That had started prior to Atlantic, but Atlantic brought that to a head. The whole world had changed at that point. Bands that came from the same world as we did—the whole Seattle thing and even Nine Inch Nails—were going top 20. Back in '88, there was bare thread of distribution and a tiny circuit of information. Back then you were happy to be able to find good records, play a show, or see a show. All of a sudden, now it's changed to where younger bands coming up saw signing to Am Rep as a potential full-time career. But as an objective person, I would be thinking, "Uh, no the reason you are here is because you are probably one of the most extreme, fucked up things going on right now and that's why you're on Am Rep and I don't see you turning the heads of kids at the mall at this point." But they still had this thing about being next Nirvana. Previously we could operate on a shoestring because the most important thing was that we got the record out. But suddenly bands' expectations rose way past anyone's capabilities. Even now versus '90 or '91, stuff has changed. Something like Korn selling millions of records . . . Something happened, but it sure as hell ain't Bon Jovi. We were in the middle point of that and everyone expected to be the next Nirvana or Soundgarden or whomever, because a lot of bands *knew* those guys and had played with them or toured together. But the ante got raised way past the the reality of selling a few thousand albums and playing to 75 people in Poughkeepsie.

So how were you feeling about the label then?

For me, things were just sort of winding down; burnout was setting in. You would get a new band, think they were amazing—like Mog Stunt team—and then they would break up or nothing happens for them. You just get discouraged because the whole world tells you you're wrong—at what point do you buck up and say "maybe they have something there?" ¶ It was a whole culmination of things, it was tougher to compete post-Nirvana with the critics and in record stores. With the critics, you know if they are on your side, it's only a matter of time before they turn on you. With record stores, a few years ago they would get solicited with 20 new releases a week. Now they are getting 300 a week. You could walk into Musicland and get a Sonic Youth record. We were victims of our own success. ¶ It was brutal, trying to break new band. The baby bands we had—Calvin Krime, Today is the Day—were really hard to try and get people to pay attention to. You can only do something you love this much with that much intensity with sometimes negligible results for so long.

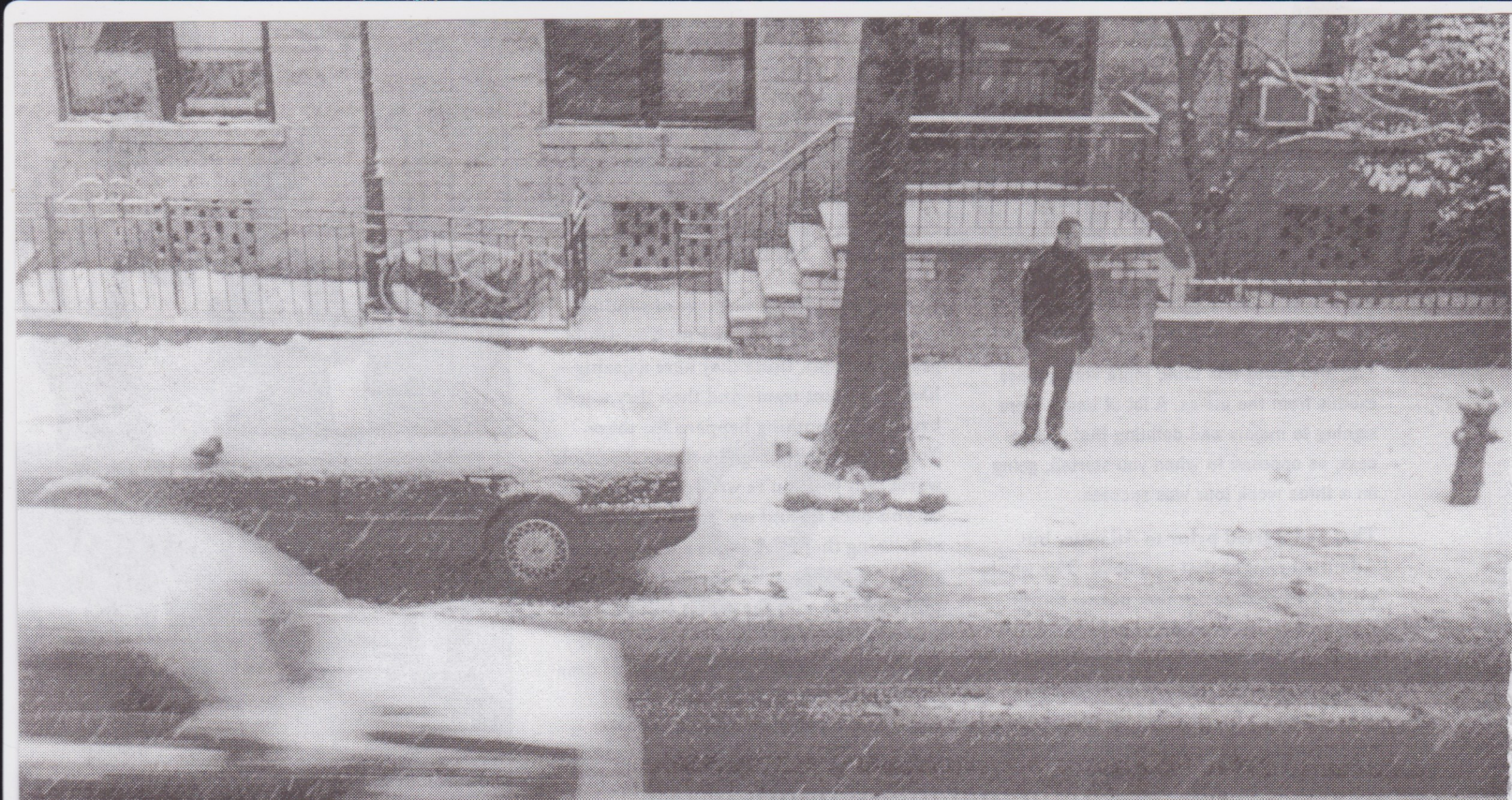
How old were you at this point?

I turned 30 in '95. So I was 30 or 31. Age was part of it too. I remember when I was living in Seattle, hanging out with a friend of mine, who was 30 at the time, and he was the drummer for a well known Seattle band. He was going off, ragging on Mudhoney "What is the Stooges rehash crap?!" I was like, "Man you're just getting old and jaded." I asked him "How old were you when you saw the Cramps?" He said he was 16 and I said "Yeah and there was likely some 30 year old standing right next to you going, 'what is this wanna be Sonics rehash bullshit?'" ¶ By '98, or so things changed, we had staffed up with Atlantic—we went from three and a half people to 10—but post-Atlantic, we cut down to the same original core group. And then, all of a sudden, there was this window—every

band had either broken up, was completely inactive, or had gone to another label and in one fell swoop we had no one on the label. Calvin Krime broke up; Nashville Pussy moved on. The last straw was the Cows calling it quits—they were one of our original bands. I wasn't about to call people up and go, "Thought you had a label? Well guess what? I quit." But this window of opportunity opened up, and so I said "Fuck it, I'm taking it." Our intention was to just stop releasing new stuff, but keep everything else available and in print.

And that's happened?

Yeah, with little exception—there's really not much call for Lubricated Goat or God Bullies cassettes these days, but when it happens, we'll be ready. Since that point, we did that Melvins single and I am still talking to Christina about doing a Boss Hog discography. We're going to do a one-sided Lifter Puller final single, and there's the possibility of a collection of old live Helmet stuff. So we didn't go out of business, we went out with our boots on. But yeah, it's pretty much just cherry pickin' and living off the corpse of Am Rep past from here on out. ©



JEREMY CHATELAIN

**What I kept in mind was that I
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themes or whatever. But, also, I
wanted it to relate to me personally.
And this is just what came out.**

As a member of Jets To Brazil, he's the quiet one. He's the one that doesn't like to do interviews; the one that often runs for cover when the hype surrounding the uber-group becomes deafening. But when it came time for Jeremy Chatelain to release his first record without the aid of his Jets To Brazil bandmates, he decided to speak up a little. "I was telling everyone about it," Chatelain says from his Brooklyn apartment via telephone. "I was like, 'I have my own record coming out!'"

Cub Country, an alt.country solo effort that Chatelain began home-recording in 1999, will probably shock even some of Jets To Brazil's most accepting fans. Gone are the big, rich autumnal hooks that fill his group's latest LP, *Four Cornered Night*, and in their place are country-western sonnets that nod to a few of Jeremy's more well-kept influences. Chatelain's first product as a soloist is a split release with fellow Brooklyn resident Utah Slim, and it's good. Surprisingly good.

On a Sunday morning this past winter, Chatelain and I talked about goin' country and goin' your own way.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**
Photo by **Russel Daniels**

Obviously, a traditional country record is probably the last thing people would expect from the bassist of one of the biggest "emo" bands around. [laughs] Have you gotten used to surprising people like this?

I think the person that I have ended up surprising the most is myself. When I decided to do this, it was because I needed an outlet for my own songs. I needed something that I could record at my house and do 100% the way I wanted to. And they just ended up sounding a little bit country, I guess. I remember telling my parents and even my mom was like, "You're doing a country record!?" That always throws me for a loop. It always surprises me that people are surprised. It seems really normal while you're doing it. It's just something that you do.

What I was surprised by was how natural the record sounds. It doesn't sound the least bit forced—which is something that is really hard to nail your first time out.

Well, country stuff is what really interests me at the moment. It's my roots, you know. I grew up in Utah and my dad and I would drive around in the mountains, listening to the only four tapes he ever owned—all of which were country. I remember him singing along to them in a really low voice that sounded totally funny. [laughs] Back then, though, I hated it. That was the stuff I really, really hated for a long time. "I like every kind of music—except for country." I must have said that a million times over the years. I just thought it was so uncool, until I heard some other bands that did it really well. I realized that those kinds of songs could be really amazing. So, when I started writing, I did it at home on an acoustic guitar. What I kept in mind was that I wanted the lyrical content to be kept in that country vein—you know, filled with heartbroken themes or whatever. But, also, I wanted it to relate to me personally. And this is just what came out.

That's part of what makes it work: you can tell that it's really something that you love. It's really heartfelt and genuine. It's not like, I don't know, a Ween record—you're not lam-

pooning this genre or using it as a persona. There's real interest there.

It's true—as my record collection grows, the more I get into it. There's so much to discover! The more I listen, the more new things I want to try. Plus, it really seems to fit. I like playing basic chords on an acoustic guitar. There's something about it that just works.

When did you begin to concentrate on your own songs?

About a year and a half ago, when I was on tour with Jets To Brazil. At the time I was feeling a little frustrated, because I thought that I had become pretty lazy. I had stopped writing lyrics and my own stuff because I was just going to rehearsal and just concentrating on writing bass lines. When we got out on tour, I thought about some of the bass lines I had written and I knew that I could make songs out of them, but not necessarily Jets To Brazil songs. They couldn't be. That band is such a different animal. So I decided that once I got home, I was going to write some songs and record them by myself. Basically, I wanted to do everything in my bedroom. Just about everything was done in here, except for the piano part Blake did. We did that at our rehearsal space in like 10 minutes.

Listening to it you really get that feeling. It sounds really spontaneous. Was that intentional?

Well, it was definitely a spur-of-the-moment type thing. Me, my friend Cash—who is Utah Slim—and our friend Jim were sitting in my living room one night, when we came up with this idea of putting out a split record on Jim's label. From there, it was basically Cash and I egging each other on. He, of course, finished his songs in like a week and I hadn't even recorded my vocals!

At first, were you really hesitant to share these songs with other people?

Oh yeah. Before I wrote these songs, there were attempts to write other songs and they were just terrible. I'd only show them to my girlfriend. She always told me that

they were good, but I figured she was just being complimentary because she felt like she had to be. I tested them by seeing if I could show a song to someone without being embarrassed. If I played it and I felt like turning it off, it was pretty safe to assume that it was not up to par. But if I felt proud of it, if I felt it was worthy of listening to, then I'd keep it. I really had to weed out a few songs before I could tell people about the songs I was writing. Some people were less supportive than others. Some of my friends were just like, "What are you doing?" They didn't get it.

Are you still in that state, where you're not sure if you're a songwriter yet?

Absolutely. I just don't think that I've done it enough. I'm not totally used to it. Right now, I'm in the middle of writing another record. I want to do a full length, record it here, and get a huge line-up to support me. A lot of people have offered to play on the next record and, also, I have asked a lot of interesting people to play on it—so it should be really awesome. I'm definitely psyched about it.

To me, and this is something that I've also noticed about Jets To Brazil, I think what you're doing is really punk. Obviously, you're not playing punk music in a traditional sense, but what the music is saying—you know, be yourself, create how you want to create—that very gesture, is pretty punk. In a less direct sense, is that what this record is about?

I think so. I was talking to Blake about this yesterday and I was like, "I'm going to be interviewed for *Punk Planet* about the record tomorrow." He thought it was really cool, but, at the same time, I think we were both like, "*Punk Planet* and this record, huh? I wouldn't really equate one with the other." But then I thought about it and realized, "No, this CD *is* punk." This goes against most people's view of punk—and that's what makes it punk. Some of the people who will read this might not see that or might not totally "get" the record, which is okay. I think it's good to go against what people expect to hear from you. ☺



Quite unexpectedly, Portland, Oregon has become this incredible punk art mecca. Cheap rent, loose job market, and tons of house shows make for an exciting distraction from the days of cloudy weather and rain.

At 27, Andrew Dickson has been involved with the punk scene for a long time, and has just completed the finishing touches to his brilliant coming of age dramedy (part drama/part comedy) film *Good Grief*. It tastefully uses Portland as the backdrop to a tale about relationships and Dungeons & Dragons. It co-stars Al Burian from *Burn Collector* zine, the band Milemarker and columnist for this magazine. With the film in the can, Dickson is finally ready to tour it. Watch for *Good Grief* in your town soon.

Interview by **James Squeaky** with help from **Alex Merrill**

Now that *Good Grief* has taken five years of your life to create, you want to take it on tour, how do you picture that working?

The tour will be in March and April, the earliest incarnation of the plan was to do it exactly like a punk rock tour—every night in a different town. ¶ Al Burian is going to accompany me to read from his book (*Burn Collector*). Al is working at a book store in Chicago right now and has been studying authors who come in to do readings—he's convinced he can do a

much better job than the authors he has observed. The Buddy System has already sold out of the first run of his book.

What do you think of the idea of playing the movie at punk shows before bands play?

We could do that, but I'm really more into the idea of it being played on the big screen in small theaters around the country. There are quite a few small movie theaters on the West Coast—certainly several in Portland; ATA in San Francisco; Seattle has The Little Theater; Vancouver BC has this awesome place called The Blinding Light; Olympia has the Capitol or Midnight Sun. I'm going to probably need to buy a video projector, which are very expensive. ¶ I don't know of too many people who have "toured" film this way. It's actually how John Waters got his start when he made his first film: he would call up university towns and ask for the midnight screening and then spend all day posterizing the town. Of course, I guess Divine has more of a draw than Al Burian.

Why did you make *Good Grief*?

Originally, I was into painting and went to college for that. I was trying to learn how the art world worked and what the options were for making that a career. My college just happened to have a really crappy art program and a really awesome film program. I think every-

one has got ideas for films; they've become so much a part of our language. I don't think paintings are really even all that much a part of our visual language anymore. You ask most people about art and they'll say something like, "I can't draw." But everyone can relate to film. ¶ It was also a really hard major to get into so I figured it must be pretty good. If I was paying for college . . . what do you get out of an English class? You pay for your books, read them, talk about them . . .

You could do that at home.

Yeah. But film, you get access to cameras and editing equipment and lights. I made a short film my senior year and got really hooked on it. I came up with an interesting approach of making a film—living in the middle of Connecticut, there wasn't a pool of actors to draw from, so I started watching my friends and people I knew to see who were the natural performers—people that when they walk into a room, people just watched them. I ended up casting two of my best friends as a couple in that film. ¶ I got the film bug from making that short and after I graduated, I wanted to make a feature. Short films are great, but feature-length film is what has always attracted me. To have enough time to really develop an idea and entertain people while subtly saying things about culture and about how you perceive rela-

I think everyone has got ideas for films; they've become so much a part of our language.

tionships. ¶ I think on the surface, *Good Grief* is a fairly harmless movie, but if you compare it to any progressive teen movie in Hollywood, it's pretty outrageous. I tried to pay close attention to what I was saying about sexuality and gender roles. Even in movies that masquerade as independent film, there's a lot of horrible sexist attitudes. Certainly nothing that shows at Sundance should be considered independent film at this point. ¶ I came up with the idea for *Good Grief* with a friend in New York. I think I come up with good concepts, but trying to work through an actual plot is much harder. I wrote a draft, which took about a year and was just awful, so I threw it out and started again.

So who are these people in your film?

They are pretty much all friends of mine. The main character, Chuck, was played by my friend Dave Gray who was very enthusiastic about the part and had played role playing games. He threw himself into it and even started taking acting lessons. Beth and Ali, I knew and had played in

bands with. Beth was going to just do wardrobe; she was helping out with casting and she read just for fun and fit the part of Darcy perfectly.

What were the relationships like between the actors? How do you direct that many people?

Everyone knew each other beforehand—they had all lived in Portland and I sorta cast some of the major people based on their real life relationships. That helped add "realism" to their acting. Everyone got along pretty well—there was definitely tension because of the conditions. ¶ Right after we cast the movie, we all got together and actually played *Dungeons and Dragons* just so we could all get into it. Overall, filming the movie was pretty fun. Like a 12 person road trip that was very goal-oriented.

Did you pay the people to be in the film?

No, actually in independent, low budget film, the way it usually works is "deferred payment": if the movie makes money, everyone is paid a deferred amount. I waver between thinking that the film won't make its money back and hoping it will.

So what did the budget end up being?

Overall, somewhere in the area of a new luxury car. I shot on film, which I don't regret—film looks better than digital or video—but it definitely is expensive. I've probably spent 40 thousand dollars over three years. I was lucky to have a few investors so it wasn't all on me. I also have a pretty good job as a set-dresser in the union, which is a perfect job to make contacts and get deals and stuff. So, most of the budget was buying film, processing film, and transferring the film to Beta SP. ¶ We had a pretty ridiculous shoot schedule, shooting most of the film in two weeks, which is really nuts considering how many actors we had and how many locations. One of the benefits of shooting on video is it's so cheap you can shoot as much video as you want—but using film, we didn't really have time to do that. I could motivate the cast with "Hey, every moment of film is costing me 50 bucks." That would cure a group case of the giggles.

How was your experience filming in Portland?

Good Grief
ANDREW DICKENSON



We did things pretty guerrilla, but the film community was supportive. Places donated food, we got to shoot at Stage 4. The amazing thing about Portland is that you have so many environments. You can live in a neighborhood but still see the huge downtown and are surrounded by mountains.

Have you shown it anywhere but Portland yet?

No. I'm going to try to get into a few film festivals, but I'm a little soured on festivals . . . I mean, it could be seen by a distributor or be written about or whatever—which is good for the film, but on the other hand why send the film to these festivals that will take your audience and make the money from showing your film when I'm in debt?

What would you say were some of the biggest challenges of making the film.

Navigating the post production because we shot on film then edited on video. Making a film is a series of simple steps, but you just have to make sure you follow through on all of them. I made mistakes that cost me a lot of money. The biggest challenge was just sticking with such an overwhelming project.

Was there anything that went easier than you thought it would?

The shoot actually went much more smoothly than I anticipated. Any number of nightmares could have happened, but it went really well—the weather was perfect.

Overall, what are you most pleased with about with the film?

Honestly, I just think it came out so much better than I thought it would. At a point, I was going to make it a much darker film—like people getting killed and a much more serious drama—but I started thinking about all the violence and sexism that masquerades as independent film and decided that it's much harder to make a film where

nobody gets killed. ¶ Drama is really hard to do—you need great actors and a great director and we didn't really have those things going for us. So, it became more of a dramedy coming of age story. It turned out much different then I thought it would, but I'm very pleased with how it came out.

What do you think the role the Internet will be in the future of independent film?

The cool thing is that there is this new market for short films on the Internet. I don't watch them much myself; I think they are for people who work desk jobs. The boss goes out of the office and then they watch a short. For me, I just have other things to be doing with my computer and don't have a desk job and there's enough film going on here in Portland. But I think that if and when our TVs become our monitors and downloading becomes more of a breeze, downloading film will become more common. That will certainly be a positive thing for independent film. ¶ We have a website for the film—that's a good way of having something up all the time that people can go and check out to learn more about the film. I can use the Internet to e-mail people and say "Hey, I made this film, go check out my website" and they can go there and get a feel for the movie—a read a synopsis, look at some info, and watch a preview. ¶ Hopefully it'll get to the point where more people will be doing this. With the technology becoming so readily available . . . Even four years ago, the prospect of making a film—much less a feature film—was a pretty crazy idea. You really had to want to do it. It wasn't like buying an amp and a guitar and learning how to play. There were only so many editing facilities and they were really expensive. Now you can buy a G4 and pirate a copy of Final Cut Pro; you can buy a digital video camera that can go right into the computer. With the means of production open-

ing up and the emergence of cool spaces like 911 and ATA to screen in, maybe doing a film will become more like touring a band. I think there is an audience for it. ¶ I think a realistic goal for *Good Grief* would be that eventually it could be picked up for video distribution. It's easy to make comparisons to music, but one of the main differences that makes it so much harder to make films is that the equivalent to the idea of a record label doesn't exist in regards to film. There's nothing really set up for ultra low-budget movies that acts as the clearing house for getting the film in all the independent video stores. I just don't have the power to go to all the places and persuade them to carry the film. It'd be the equivalent of buying instruments, practicing, putting together an album, making all the cover artwork, getting it pressed, putting it all together, having a few crates of records and then saying, "You call all the record stores in Omaha and I'll start on . . ."

It's probably even harder with movies because the market is not as concentrated. There are a lot of people who say "I really like independent music—I'm going to go out and buy some punk rock CDs." There aren't a lot of people who devote a lot of time to finding independent film.

Even within the punk community, there are a lot of people who wouldn't be caught dead listening to music on a major label, yet their favorite films are all released by major studios.

Film just tends to go ignored. I love film and would like to see more independent films, but it's just not something I actively seek out.

Insound has a good independent video selection and are very excited about film—I'll probably sell videos through them. But in general, videos don't sell well—people rent movies, not buy them. ©



I started thinking about all the violence and sexism that masquerades as independent film and decided that it's much harder to make a film where nobody gets killed.

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND TEDDY DUCHAMP'S ARMY

1. When did your band form?

Mike Rock, Stephen McMillen, Todd Ladner and Brian Garbark first played together on new years eve '98-'99, Andy Wright joined in November of '99.

2. When will it break up?

When we find the answer to question 14.

3. What have you released so far?

A CDEP on Hope Records.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

To travel to distant, far away lands, meet interesting exotic people, and kill them.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

Playing in a room full of dead animal carcasses at the Bucktail's Lodge.

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

The show at the Bucktail's Lodge.

7. State your purpose.

When you get the right combination of terrorists together it's going to happen . . . no matter what!

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

1. Duran Dukakis,
2. Breakin' the Law, Breakin' the Law
3. Buckets of Blood

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

If there's anything worth doing, it's worth doing right!

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

Punk rock, reminiscent of mid/late '80s DC, but a bit more melodic, played fast, fun, and furiously.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

The answers to these questions.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

The Village People! . . . wait a second . . . I'm sorry, we have to look that word up.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

We have no lives outside of music.

14. What is selling out?

Ahh c'mon guys, it's so simple, maybe you need a refresher course . . . it's all ball bearings these days!

15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

We're counting on it.

16. Where do you practice?

Pittsburgh, in South Oakland—home of Dan Marino and Andy Warhol.

17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

Minor Threat, The Police, and Public Enemy, we would play first so we could sit back and enjoy the show. The other three would have to shink on it.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

To finish these questions alive.

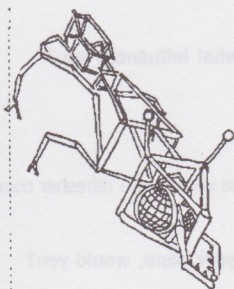
19. What makes for a good show?

Baseball bats and iced tea in a carton.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

"For your . . . for your eyes only" by the lovely Sheena Easton.

BLU



BLU 1

The most important thing to understand about
rather than a goal. Blu is about documenting and

Blu magazine is a book in the form of a bi-monthly magazine. For five bucks a pop, you get fresh takes on the roots, content, and direc-

tions of 21st century radical politics, with a CD that elaborates and elucidates *Blu*'s vision of a unified left that speaks in many tongues, with the familiar flows of Dead Prez, Saul Williams, Bahamadia, Asian Dub Foundation, and Mos Def among the up-and-comers. With scrupulously researched articles in eye-scrunching font for the eggheads, fold-out full color pages for the graffiti-minded, and music damn near everybody can bounce to, *Blu* is a multi-media project that makes the revolution irresistible, all the while considering the work of Angela Davis, the Zapatistas, Homies Unidos, Frantz Fanon, and countless others.

Like many projects of the newest left, part of the game is to figure out ways to do things conventional wisdom says can't be done: in this case, produce a professional-

quality magazine and CD at below-market prices and get graduate-level information out to people marketers say don't read. Do this collectively, via a nationwide editorial team known as the Blu Network; depend on street hustle for distribution, with a growing Blu Army which gets the magazine up in mom and pops and bookstores, on walls and the airwaves; and you have a truly innovative model for business. *Blu*'s growth in just two years, from a college zine to a magazine with an expanding international readership of 10,000, is a testament to the vitality of its content and context.

I hooked up with *Blu*'s editorial collective when they were hard at work getting issue #11 to the printers. Over e-mail I connected with Marianne Mommsen, Features Editor, 23; Queen Godis, Music Director, 21; and Pete Mommsen, Managing Editor, 24. Many e-mails later, we managed to pull something together which we hope readers can learn and build from.

Interview by Aaron Shuman

***Blu*'s roots are in the Bruderhof, a Christian communal movement that traces its roots back to resisting the Nazis in 1930s Germany. How did you start to publish a youth-oriented hip hop magazine?**

Pete: The Bruderhof, as a community and a movement, is dedicated to promoting a new society. The advent of such a society requires a transformation of everything as we know it—a complete spiritual & social transformation of the individual as well as the collective human being. ¶ But working for such a radicalization of society—or at a very minimum causing reconsideration of the status quo—involves a certain amount of presentation. Global citizens are bombarded with advertising images, all of which reinforce the selfish, lustful tendencies of postmodern human nature. The Bruderhof is trying to reach those often cynical/jaded people to share our vision for a future world while at the same time expressing our solidarity with oppressed peoples everywhere. ¶ The most

Essentially, while *Blu* on the surface looks cultural, it is truly a magazine of complete transformation: social, spiritual, political, and cultural.



Blu is that we look at it as a means promoting a conscious way of living



effective way to reach people with a message is to offer something they can connect with—hitting people over the head with a barrage of facts and logical disquisitions, true or not—a la *The Nation*—is for the most part not an effective delivery mechanism. What people can connect with are primarily cultural issues: music, lyrics, poetry, art, performance. So essentially, while *Blu* on the surface looks cultural, it is truly a magazine of complete transformation: social, spiritual, political, and cultural.

So then why the focus on hip hop?

Pete: *Blu's* focus is reaching youth, energizing youth, activating youth, and radicalizing youth. And youth culture today, at least that part of youth culture which is not co-opted by corporate mass marketing falls primarily into either the punk/hard-core/straightedge camp or the hip hop camp. Obviously hip hop is being and has been co-opted by monster corporations, but originally—and still today on the underground—it is an authentic expression of real people.

Was the focus on hip hop simply an evolution from Bruderhof's political work, or was there a conscious decision made to reach out to the hip hop community?

Pete: *Blu* never made a conscious decision to become a hip hop mag. I would say our association with political activists working around issues of police brutality, political prisoners, the prison industrial complex, and the death penalty tuned our ears to the connection that hip hop has to youth today, not only urban youth but also suburban and rural white kids. The mass marketing of mainstream hip hop artists like Jay-Z, Wu-Tang, and Puffy has helped *Blu* by broadening the appeal of hip hop to the extent that it is now an easily recognizable and marketable music genre and radio playlist category—even if it is still not widely known as a complete urban culture.

How did you manage to build such tight connections with hip hop?

Pete: Although this wasn't a conscious decision, I would say that people in a community easily connect with other people who have similar values. The loyalties within the hip hop community—to the culture and the sources of the culture as well as to other people within that community—are very strong and deep-seated. Similarly as Bruderhof youth, we take a lot of pride in the legacy of our movement and we try to bring that to the magazine.

When was *Blu* founded?

Marianne: *Blu* traces its ancestry to an arty zine called *UR* that a couple of us who are now *Blu* editors published in 1997 before we dropped out of college. After a gap of about a year during which each of us separately became politicized—a story in itself—we decided to try another zine, this time a more political venture called *Junket* which we distributed at an activist conference we attended. A couple months later, we republished this as *Blu* 1. ¶ It took us about five months after that to figure out what we were trying to say with the magazine, and why—this process continues with each issue, of course. Eventually *Blu* 2, which we think of as the first real *Blu*, came along with its strange fishy cover and un-listenable CD. ¶ *Blu* started as a publication for young organizers, especially the hip hop and spoken word crowd—people involved in campaigns to free US political prisoners, for Mumia and Leonard Peltier, people who were inspired by the movements of the '60s and '70s and who wanted to see that happen again. After putting out a couple of issues, very much on the DIY tip, we started to realize that *Blu* was meant to be something much bigger. We got a very enthusiastic response from people outside the “politically conscious” choir. And that's exactly

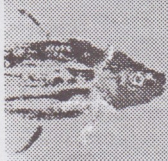
the point. We learned by doing: if you were to call the first couple of issues “unpredictable” that would be polite. ¶ Since then, we've tried to have a new issue every two months, but we prefer to publish late rather put out a sub-standard issue. So it's been pretty irregular, although the trend is definitely toward consistency.

Have you grown steadily, or did your growth shoot up at a particular point?

Marianne: The first time we realized that *Blu* might have relevance beyond zinesters was at Millions for Mumia in 1998 where we were distributing *Blu* 3, which is dedicated to Mumia. We were shocked to sell out of the 300 or 400 copies we had with us. We also talked to quite a few veteran freedom fighters and activists who were very supportive of what we were trying to do—people like Pam Africa, Geronimo jiJaga, Chief Billy Tye. Then Dead Prez contributed their single “Hip Hop” for the *Blu* 4 CD, and that, combined with an interview with Chuck D in the same issue, made a lot of people in the hip hop community take notice of what we were doing. Since then several especially popular issues, notably *Blu* 7, the first women's issue, and *Blu* 9, the *Black August* issue, have prompted growth spurts. We're looking for great things from our second annual women's issue due out in March.

One of the things I like about *Blu* is that it's participatory, from the fact that it's collectively produced to that it's distributed by the Blu Army. What does it mean to produce a participatory magazine, and how does that make it different from a conventional, commercial magazine?

Marianne: The most important thing to understand about *Blu* is that we look at it as a means rather than a goal. *Blu* is about documenting and promoting a conscious

BLU 2°

way of living; it's not just some progressive music mag with artsy pretensions but no ties to the grassroots. Although we include a couple interviews with major artists or popular culture-type articles in each issue, we make very few editorial

decisions based on commercial appeal. ¶ Being a participatory magazine means that some of the amazing non-glamorous grassroots work that's going on in communities all over the country, as well as underground artists who are giving a positive message, can get recognition because members of the network—who are themselves mostly organizers or artists—bring them to our attention. *Blu* isn't trying to promote any set dogma of politics, art, or religion. What we do share is a bunch of core beliefs which we put forth in *Blu* through the writing and the music on the CD, and also our whole MO as a magazine business. ¶ For example, it's really important for us to promote the idea of community: people living and celebrating and fighting together. Many kinds of music—reggae or Fela Kuti's Afrobeat, then hip hop and most recently dance culture—all started out with a communal vibe at the core of what they were about. Obviously the word "community" in a rave setting is something that's easy to trivialize. But if you live according to the values of community and spiritual consciousness by freeing yourself from the mental slavery of materialism, that has radical implications.

How does the collective work to produce the content of the magazine?

Marianne: Once we decide what the theme for a given issue is going to be, we brainstorm with members of the network—by phone, email, and when possible in face to face meetings—about people or movements we'd like to feature, artists we'd like to



include on the CD, as well as who's the best person to write the article, do the interview, or approach the artist/label. ¶ As features editor, I'm responsible for making sure that shit gets in on time and is up to standard, but I often run submissions or ideas by

past members of the network as the issue takes shape. Similarly, as Queen Godis works on the lineup for the CD we'll have several listening sessions to figure out if the sounds and concepts on the CD reflect the content of the issue. Editorial direction is directly based on conversations with members of the network but is actually set by staff members including Pete Mommsen [managing editor], Russell Shoatz III [creative director], Priscilla Arnold [senior editor], and Queen Godis [music director], myself, and design editor Martina Weeks. ¶ Members of the network excel in different areas: some, like Shante Bullock in DC, give excellent editorial feedback and suggestions; others, like Kahlil Jacobs Fantauzzi in the Bay Area or Hakim el Din in Philly, are world-class promoters. Pablo and Carlos Caraballo in Brooklyn do everything from distributing and promoting to contributing drawings and writing. Then there are artists like Emerge—AKA Stewy Nuke'em—also out of Philly, who contributes a conscious comic strip for each issue, or Aya de Leon, also of the Bay Area, who's a spoken word artist who shouts us out from stage as well as selling LOTS of magazines, and of course Queen Godis who brings her talent to creating the CD. Yaya in Sacramento does beautiful interviews and photography, Kamel Jacot Bell in



Oakland promotes, does interviews, and gives is a reliable sounding board for editorial and marketing ideas . . . you get the picture.

Let's talk about how you grew *Blu* to its present size. Do you do any distribution

the way a conventional magazine does, through a distributor, or has it all been through the hand-to-hand contact of your Blu Army?

Marianne: *Blu* is distributed internationally by Tower. We also use three indie distributors. Our primary mode of distribution, though, is via the Blu Army. Magazine distribution is a ruthless business, so we would like eventually to stop using conventional distributors and rely instead on the Blu Army.

Where did the idea to distribute through the Blu Army come from?

Marianne: The Blu Army existed before anybody in the office noticed it was there or gave it a name. Since *Blu* 3 there have been people who are so ardently dedicated to *Blu* that it seems like promoting and distributing the magazine is a way of life for them. At one point, this amazing group of people reached a critical mass and we realized we had an army out there. At that point we started to figure out how we could support the troops by means of promotional material, giveaways, and publicizing their shows and organizations in the magazine and on the website. ¶ At one point, we were approached by several large magazine distributors and had to choose whether to sign over exclusive distribution rights to one of these monsters, or to stick with guerrilla

BLU



marketing and distribution. *Blu's* identity as a magazine dictated this decision, because without our grassroots support and credibility *Blu* couldn't exist.

Let's talk about the CD that comes with every issue.

When you're putting together the CD, is it that you look to work with particular artists, or you look for work on the particular issue theme?

Queen Godis: The process for creating the *Blu* CD is forever in transition. That's simply because of the fact that as *Blu* changes and grows, so too will each issue and everything that goes along with it. There was a time when we had very little access to music or poetry from any artist, and now, we are thankful that they are starting to come in by the truckload. Unfortunately, this means that it will take longer to sort the music, listen to it and feature some artists. Not to mention the fact that some issues are theme-specific, which may already eliminate immediate use of some submissions. ¶ We want the CD to reflect and entertain our audience in one way or another. For some, the CD is attractive because there are individual dope tracks or artists that they are familiar with, but for others it is simply the fact that the overall thematic structure of the CD allows them to be able to appreciate and understand how such diverse artists and music can coexist in each issue.

You point out in the magazine that it takes a lot of money "to manufacture and ship this kick-a\$\$, almost ad-free mag and CD." How do you do it?

Peter: *Blu* is published by the youth of the Bruderhof communities with vital assistance from a worldwide collective of staff and contributors, essentially all of who volunteer their skills, services, etc to *Blu*. The members of the Bruderhof who work on *Blu*



are not paid anything—no Bruderhof members are paid anything for anything they do—and although some non-Bruderhof *Blu* staff work on stipends, they are not in any sense salaried. They are not in *Blu* for the money, but because they believe in it.

How do you do all this for \$5? Why not charge more?

Peter: At \$5 the CD/mag combination is intentionally underpriced. Also, our market research shows that we're competing against mix tapes and bootlegs rather than other mags so we're pretty sure that raising the price would be a big mistake.

What do you think *Blu's* effect has been on hip hop culture and youth political culture at large? Where is *Blu* going next?

Marianne: I don't want to generalize about *Blu's* effect on youth culture, but there are a couple specific cases I know of in which *Blu* has played a direct role in politicizing people. This letter to the editor is a great summary of the way *Blu* is supposed to work: "Ayo first i'd like to admit I purchased yallz mag just for da free cd. Yup I was cheap but not so cheap that i wont subscribe to yallz mag very soon. May equality and utter freedom be achieved threw what folks like u all and everyone associated with dis mag i'm luvn da feel of goin to war politically for a new change peace." ¶ Of course most of the political and historical information we print in *Blu* is available on the Internet, but collecting it into a single publication with an appealing format makes learning about Black Liberation, Puerto Rican independence, police brutality, or whatever the theme may be, a lot more doable. ¶ Our immediate goal is to improve distribution, because a lot of people tell us that they know about the magazine but it's not readily available outside of a few major cities. Our



number one offensive with the *Blu* Army at the moment is having people take *Blu* to mom and pop stores in their area and ask them to carry it. ¶ We have long term plans to expand beyond a magazine. For 2001, we're talking about some spinoff projects like

books and compilation albums. We'd also like to meet more regularly with people from the network since our ultimate goal is to be part of an international youth movement of people passionate about justice, and that's something you can't do on paper, through your stereo, or over the Internet.

Peter: A lot of people, and I mean a lot of "conscious" people, often fall into the trap of putting artists in boxes . . . this one's jiggy, that one's political, this one's conscious and underground, that one's gangsta or commercial. I think that's very narrow-minded and pernicious to what art is all about, which is to *move* people. In this situation, we don't want for artists to try to turn themselves into political or community leaders on the basis of their star power or anything like that. That would be demanding that they do something other than what they're good at. Artists can best help "the cause" so to speak, by working on their craft and becoming the best possible artists they can. That means *truly* expressing themselves and the reality around them in a way that will communicate. ¶ Outside of their art, artists have a responsibility like every other human being to use whatever platform and wealth they have in a positive way. Do benefit concerts. Do conscious shoutouts on the record—even Jay Z shout-outed Mumia. When you start a summer camp, take an interest in the kids and make sure it's running right. Recognize your place in the tradition of the griot, the storyteller of your own particular community. And yeah, get in touch with *Blu*. ©

Blu isn't trying to promote any set dogma of politics, art, or religion. What we do share is a bunch of core beliefs which we put forth in *Blu* through the writing and the music on the CD, and also our whole MO as a magazine business. For example, it's really important for us to promote the idea of community: people living and celebrating and fighting together. Many kinds of music—reggae or Fela Kuti's Afrobeat, then hip hop and most recently dance culture—all started out with a communal vibe at the core of what they were about.

the Gits

The Gits will languish in relative obscurity forever, probably. That's all Matt, Joe, and I can do now to keep the bands and Mia's

Simply put, The Gits were a band you should have heard. At a small, smoky club maybe, tearing through songs, with their incredible female singer holding notes longer than you ever imagined possible. "Punk-blues," you might have called them, as you listened transfixed, while waves of whiskey and musical magic washed over your body, soaking your soul in a sweat of purity you'd never known. You'd have sought solace in the singer's soulful, searing sound, backed by a band that brought the moment together, every time they played.

They were a band you should have known. Poised to gain massive, well-deserved acclaim, you would have, too. They'd moved to Seattle just before "grunge broke," and surely would have been one of the quality, long-lasting luminaries to emerge from that time.

But tragedy struck The Gits on July 7, 1993, when singer Mia Zapata was raped and murdered. Her killer is unknown to this very day. Her death sent seismic shock waves through the city's tightly knit music community. An organization called Home Alive was born in the wake of the tragedy; a grassroots group dedicated to getting its members just that—home alive.

The rest of the band—Mia's band, you might say—have continued on in their own way. They've played in new bands, formed new alliances, struggled through the years of questioning the unknown. With Mia's killer still not found, guitarist Joe Spleen, bassist Matt Dresdner, and drummer Steve Moriarty have all survived the uncertainty, the loss of their fallen friend. A recently released retrospective of The Gits, *Seafish Louisville* (Broken Rekids), attests to their talent, and unrealized potential.

Tragedy is when one of our numbers falls. Especially who's soulful, searing singing, and punchy, prefect lyrics had the potential to touch many more than they did. But Mia Zapata's death is only part of this history. So much more came before the horrible end.

This is the rest of their story.

Interview by **Will Tupper**

Tell me a little bit about the start of the band.

Steve: I guess we met in 1985. We used to drink together at a bar in Yellow Springs Ohio, called The Saloon. We were in college there, and we were the heaviest drinkers we knew, so we had that in common. We were like 20 years old or something. Joe, Matt, and Mia were jamming with Bob Lee, and actually played a few gigs with him. He later quit school, moved to LA, and joined Claw Hammer out there. He played a bunch on Mike Watt's solo album—we're still in touch. When Bob left, they asked me to join, and I did. We played around Ohio and with the touring bands we could get on with. We also sort of terrorized the campus of Antioch College and basically had a good time there until it was over.

What were your first impressions when you met Mia Zapata? Matt, I've read that the first time you heard Mia sing, her voice made you cry.

Matt: When I first met Mia, I was in awe of her energy. She had the type of presence that would take over a room. When I finally did hear her sing, at a coffee-house-type performance at Antioch, I melted. I literally *did* cry, her voice was so moving. She was accompanying herself on guitar and she played as if she had three broken fingers. But her playing ability was not a distraction from her voice, her intensity, or the emotion that rang from her lyrics. I wish I could remember the exact songs she performed that night. ¶ Three or four months later, I hooked up with Joe Spleen, and asked if he wanted to start a band. The whole time I knew I wanted Mia to sing. Several of our friends wanted to audition for the band as vocalists, which we tolerated because Mia was in Disneyland with her family. Upon her return, the poor boys were given the news that we had our singer and The Gits were born.

Your first album, *Kings and Queens*, you recorded in Ohio, before the band moved to Seattle, just as grunge was about to break big. Was the band your top priority at the time?

Matt: We recorded the songs that became *Kings and Queens* while still at Antioch because we were all headed in different geographic locations, and we wanted to document what we'd done. After some personal searching, we all realized that our music was bigger than we were, and it became the priority in all our lives. ¶ The move to Seattle was arbitrary. News of the grunge movement had not yet hit the cornfields of the Midwest. Steve had heard of Soundgarden, but that was it. Joe and I wanted to stay away from the coast of our tormented youths, so moving west was a given. We'd investigated San Francisco as a band, and it felt like the costume-saturated music scene was imploding. Portland was an option, but Seattle looked like a city with opportunity. It was dumb luck that got us there in 1989, just as Sub-Pop was becoming something. Our musical style and our nasty attitudes kept us on the fringe of the local scene, although our second Seattle show was opening for Nirvana and Tad at the Hub Ballroom at the University of Washington. ¶ Little by little, by putting out our own records, organizing many of our own shows, we developed a very loyal following in Seattle. We ended up in Europe when *Nevermind* hit, which signaled the beginning of all the hype and inevitable demise of everything we thought was important in music. The world's attention on our little corner didn't hurt our popularity any, but the depression-filled grungies eventually prepared the world for fluffy Hootie and goddamn Ricky Martin. What a painful cycle.

Let's talk a little more about Mia. Do you think her listening public really understood who she was?

Matt: Mia was a crazy alcoholic who had more people who thought they were her

care, just as long as our music is available for those who seek it out.

legacy alive, and we will!

best friend than I have friends. She had the biggest heart that let people in who I'd have never given a chance to speak. She was the best punk rock lyricist that ever lived in the history of the world, ever. She was my dear, dear friend, and she deserved to live to be the old, nasty woman that she always wanted to be. I miss Mia.

Where does her murder case stand now?

Steve: The case is still open and ongoing. I spoke with the cop in charge last week, and we're exploring some new leads now. We won't rest until we find the heartless motherfucker who did this. People that fucked up don't do shit like that once and then retire to Florida—he's most likely doing it over and over. Maybe he's in prison or dead; but if he isn't dead, we'll find him. For Mia, her family and her friends, it's not over until her murder is avenged. That's it.

Tell me a little bit about the Home Alive organization. Their formation was a pretty inspiring example of a grassroots response to tragedy. Are you still affiliated with them at all?

Steve: I am a good friend with former and current members of Home Alive. They are coalition building with groups in Chicago and London, and I am helping them put out a second CD compilation. I am also taking a kickboxing class through them, so if you see me on tour with my new band The Pinkos, you better step aside—just kidding. They are still going strong. Go to the web site to learn more.

Your music always had a really soulful, blues feel that blended effortlessly with the hard guitars and driving drums of punk. Was the blues influence mostly from Mia? I'd put her voice up against Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday, or any other legendary lady blues singer.

Matt: You're right about the blend of blues and punk. It *was* effortless. It was our four voices singing in unison. The blues tone was Mia's influence; she listened to a lot of great soul music. She

loved Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Billie Holiday, as well as Patti Smith and Iggy Pop. ¶ The transition to punk was innate. Joe and I had been listening to punk for a long time, but we both knew and loved a lot of different music. It felt like our sound just happened. Joe was basically teaching me to play bass as we wrote songs, so I was influenced most by him. ¶ We did covers like "A Chance Is Gonna' Come," by Sam Cooke—although we stuck more to Otis' version—to give Mia a chance to really sing. I'm glad you would put her voice up against any legendary blues singer. That is the stature she deserves. Had she not been murdered, the rest of the world would have understood her gift as well.

Let's talk about the new Gits album, *Seafish Louisville*. It seems like a great retrospective of the band's career. Would you consider it your magnum opus?

Joe: I don't think The Gits ever really got a chance to record our magnum opus, so the new album is as close as it'll ever get.

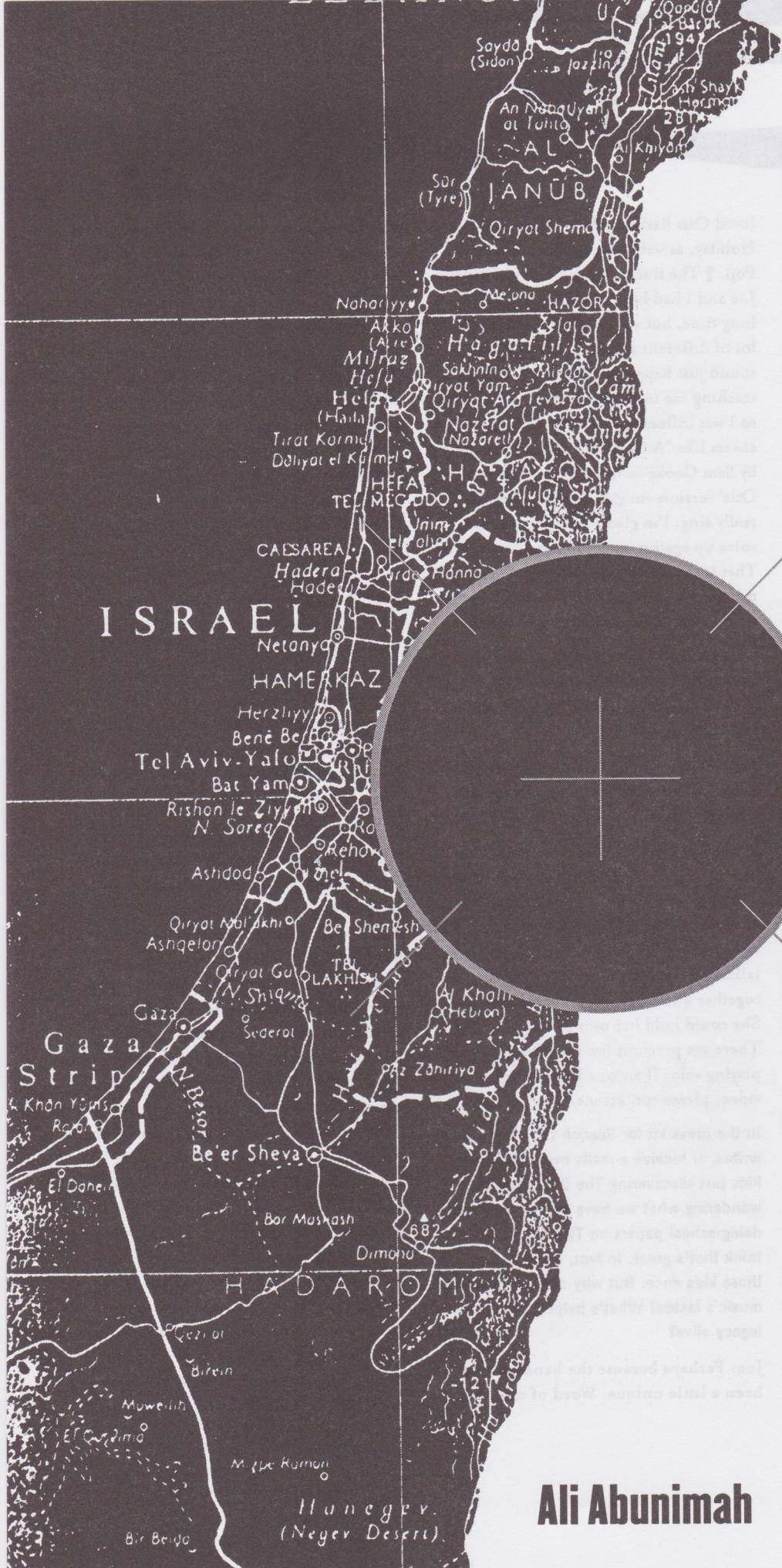
Steve: I might add that, while it may be our all-around best representation of what The Gits were about, we could have made an even greater album—perhaps many. We were just getting started, really. Mia and I talked on the last tour about putting together a solo album of her stuff as well. She could hold her own in a solo setting. There are precious few recordings of her playing solo. If anyone has any audio or video, please contact me.

In the press kit for *Seafish Louisville*, Steve writes, "I receive e-mails every day from kids just discovering The Gits. They're wondering what we have out, or they are doing school papers on The Gits or Mia." I think that's great. In fact, I was one of those kids once. But why do you think the music's lasted? What's helped keep your legacy alive?

Joe: Perhaps because the band may have been a little unique. Word of mouth

within the punk community was the most important factor in The Gits receiving any recognition while we were together, and it's probably played the largest role in the band being remembered at all today. People outside the punk community heard of the band only through Mia's death, which was widely publicized after the fact, but aside from that it's mainly been an underground, word of mouth thing. ¶ Last year, I was in a record store in New York buying a copy of the first Gits CD to give to someone, and when I reached the counter, the guy who ran the store congratulated me on choosing it. He began telling me what a great album it is, and how he tries to turn as many people as possible on to it, since not many people on the East Coast had heard of The Gits. A friend of mine also told me that all the punks in the one or two remaining squats on the Lower East Side know all the words to The Gits songs.

Steve: When something is truly of great quality or any art is really meaningful, it will last, and it will continue to touch people who can access it. Or, as long as there are people putting together little punk bands and trying to get their point across. Mia was a timeless person. A true genius, but her fire wasn't suited for jazz or some controlled or highly stylized musical art form. Her passion was all about punk and energy and giving. She was a punk poet and perhaps one of the best lyricists and rock singers ever. Only a few of us, fortunate enough to own The Gits music, will ever know that. But those of us that do, we're really lucky, and the music will continue to make our lives better until the end. The Gits will languish in relative obscurity forever, probably. I don't care, just as long as our music is available for those who seek it out. That's all Matt, Joe, and I can do now to keep the bands and Mia's legacy alive, and we will! ©



ISRAEL

Ali Abunimah

...but it's hard to have friends. The fact
...legacy alive, and we will.

...best friend than I have friends. She had
...the biggest heart that for people to whom I'd
...have never given a chance to speak. She
...was the best punk rock person that ever
...lived in the history of the world. And she
...was my dear, dear friend, and she
...deserved to live to be the old, warty woman
...that she always wanted to be. I miss this.

Where does her music case stand now?

Green: The case is still open and waiting.
I spoke with the cop in charge last week
and we're exploring some new leads now.
We won't rest until we find the person
responsible for who did this. People that
linked up don't do this. It's like that once and
then return to Florida—he's most likely
doing it over and over. Maybe he's in
prison or dead, but it's not dead, we'll
find him. For me, that jump and how
friends. It's not over until we find him.
Anyway. That's it.

Tell me a little bit about the 1980s
mission. That mission was a pretty big
example of a personal response to terror.
Did you still identify with them at all?

Green: I am a good friend with former
members of Hamas. They are
cooperation building with groups in Chicago
and London, and I am helping them get
out a second CD compilation. I am
taking a kidnapping class through him, so
if you see me on tour with my new band
The Father, you better step aside—just
kidding. They're still going strong. Go to
the web site to learn more.

You music always had a really special place
that first bonded effectively with the band
guitar and driving drums of punk. Was the
punk influence mostly from that? I'd put her
voice up against the famous Billie Holiday or
any other legendary lady blues singer.

Mam: You're right about the blend of
blues and punk. It was a real effort. It was
our first voice singing in unison. The
blues tone was this influence, the
turned to a lot of great soul music. She

During the first week of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a story ran in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* about how hackers sympathetic to the Palestinians had broken into the Israeli government's computer systems and shut down a number of crucial military related websites. This hacktivist attack made for an interesting distinction between this new uprising and the one that had preceded it in 1987, when computers weren't as prevalent, and the Internet was in its infancy. The Intifada, like everything else nowadays, had taken to the net. But it isn't just hackers using the Internet to further the struggle for Palestinian rights—activists are as well.

One of the leading Palestinian activists to utilize the net is Chicagoan Ali Abunimah. Ali has been sending out e-mail missives to the international news media on how it routinely misrepresents the Arab-Israeli conflict for years now. But the latest Palestinian uprising has brought Ali's well-reasoned message to the world stage.

A researcher at the University of Chicago, vice-president of the Arab-American Action League, and scholar of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict in his own right, Ali has written thousands of letters to the likes of National Public Radio, CNN, *The Independent*, and the *New York Times* among many other news providers pointing out the biases and distortions inherent in their reporting on the subject. Ali has exhaustively catalogued each of these correspondences on his website, *Ali Abunimah's Bitter Pill*. His site also includes best set of links for resources on the Middle East imaginable. As part of *Punk Planet's* own effort to report on the conflict, I had a chance to speak with Ali in December, 2000 about the current Intifada, Israeli politics and his particular spin on the ongoing tragedy.

Interview by Joel Schalit

As we sit down to talk, there are reports of progress in talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel—what's your reaction?

What's happened is that the Americans and the Israelis have agreed with each other that it would be great if the Palestinians would agree to their terms. What the Israelis do is that they don't

negotiate with the Palestinians; they negotiate amongst themselves and they negotiate with the Americans and then they present the results to the Palestinians and say "take it or leave it." What this demonstrates is that they've really learned nothing from the past 11 weeks and that they still think that they can offer the Palestinians less than the minimum. ¶ What the Palestinians are really asking for is the minimum because the West Bank and Gaza are less than a fifth of Palestine. The Palestinians are saying, "Look, you want to partition the country? OK, you already have 80 percent, but we're not going to share with you the remaining 20 percent." Then of course the Israelis have come up with this new idea, which is to try and press the Palestinians to give up the rights of refugees to return in exchange for concessions on Jerusalem. But it's not going to wash—it's wishful thinking. Barak has his election coming up—it's totally detached from what the reality is. I don't think it's going to go anywhere. If by some miracle they make an agreement, and it follows the lines of what's leaking out in the press, I think it's just going to inflame the Intifada more than anything else.

And the Intifada will kick into higher gear as a result.

Yes, I think it will. If what is being leaked is truly agreed upon, I think that it won't work because people will feel like they did not sacrifice so much for such a sham. The same thing happened without an agreement—it happened in reaction to the Camp David talks last year, where people saw that for all the talk, Israel was not willing to do the minimum for peace, which is to get the hell out of the West Bank and Gaza. They're still talking about keeping 80 percent of the settlers there, keeping East Jerusalem, keeping the Jordan Valley, all of this kind of thing. People were saying, "This is useless. If this is what the final agreement is going to be like, to hell with it." So that is where we are. ¶ What's very worrying is that there is no effective Palestinian leadership to channel the uprising, to articulate national goals. This

is where we're going. That's how the African National Congress worked in South Africa—they said, "These are our national goals, this is our strategy" and they led people there. We don't have that. The US of course has no leadership either, nor does Israel. So it's a worrying situation.

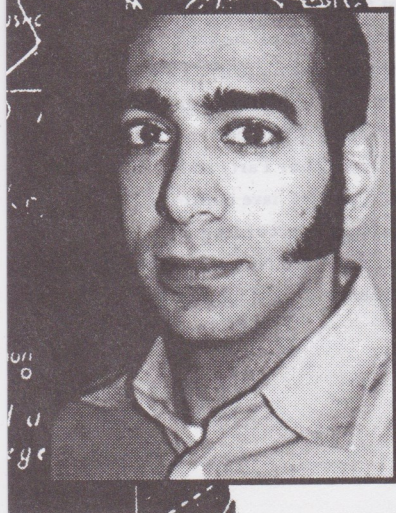
How do you feel about those who would argue that the only remaining piece of the puzzle—in a way, the key missing ingredient—is a leftist Israeli administration to implement a truly just peace agreement?

This is the same nonsense that we've been hearing for at least 15 years. Several years ago I heard Norman Finkelstein give a talk. He gave a very nice lecture on the differences between Likud [Israel's largest right-wing party] and Labor [Israel's largest liberal party]. He said that the difference is about five percent. You look at the plans put forward by Likud and Labor for a final status agreement and there is a very broad consensus between the Israeli right wing and the mainstream Zionist Left.

Would you throw the Meretz Party [Israel's largest leftist Jewish political party] in there?

Yes. The consensus is always for Israel to hold on to at least some settlements—the Likud would hold on to a few more—but there is a consensus that Israel would hold on to all of the settlements around Jerusalem. But if there's a Palestinian state, it would be truncated and carved up into Bantustans. If you look at the maps for Netanyahu's so-called "Allon Plus Plan" and you look at what Barak is offering, you'll see that there's very little difference. The only reason that Labor has been willing to consider a Palestinian state is that the last thing they want is to have more Arabs living in Israel because that would spoil the Jewish majority. The ideological commitment to settlements and to all of that is what we would call in the US "bipartisan." The Labor Party started them, and both parties have continued them. ¶ For example, according to a report released by Peace Now a couple of weeks ago, settlement construction has

I think one can speak much more accurately about a "Judeo-Muslim" ethic and a "Judeo-Muslim" history. Part of the future is recovering that history and making people aware that Jewish philosophy—medieval Jewish philosophy in particular—was heavily influenced by Muslim thinking; that much Hebrew poetry is influenced by Arabic poetry.



risen 52 percent since the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993. Barak has approved more new construction than even Netanyahu did. The basic consensus is that Israel must be a Jewish state, which means that it's a state where Arabs are kept to a minimum. "We have some Arabs and we're not going to expel them," the thinking goes, "but we're certainly not going to do our utmost to make them equal so that they'd want to stay." This was always the ideological dilemma between Zionism and democracy. Israel wants to be a democracy but it also wants to be a Jewish state. The only way you can do both is if you make sure that there are more Jews than Arabs.

Yeah, but it's not even a democracy for Jews. For example, parliament just revised a Basic Law to let Netanyahu run for office again.

But for Jews, it's as democratic as any country is. For a long time, South Africa was also a democracy, but it was a democracy for white people. In the end, as Apartheid crumbled, they cracked down on white people too, but for a long time whites were pretty free in South Africa—they could say what they wanted, they could criticize the government and so on.

Sure, and the same holds true for Israeli Jews. Point well taken.

The other thing is that Israel is falling apart as a polity. It's very fractious. What always united Israel was enmity with the Arabs. Nobody in Israel seriously believes that Israel is under any military threat from any of its neighbors. So that unifying force is not there anymore. Now you have the big split between secular and religious, Ashkenazi and Oriental Jews, and a generation of young people who are more interested in the NBA and in the Internet, who don't really want to sacrifice three years of their life to go to the army. Those are all ominous social phenomena. It makes it a lot harder. Then you have a million Russians brought in during the last decade for the principle purpose of defusing what the Israelis call "the demographic time bomb," which is basically an acknowledgement that they need more Jews because the Arabs breed faster than the Jews do." However, the Russians aren't really all that interested in being Jewish. According to recent Israeli estimates, over 65 percent of them are not Jewish.

But those are rabbinical figures, which I tend to not place much stock in. They've very racist, even though there is some truth to them.

Yes, they are, but there is a substantial portion of these immigrants that are Christian and not any kind of Jew.

Right, they just want to escape Russia and may have had a Jewish uncle or something.

They're not there for ideological reasons. Many of them would have gone to the US if they could have, but couldn't. Of course Natan Sharansky, head of the Russian party [Israel B'Aliyah] who suffered under oppression in the Soviet Union, fought for freedom, and then came and did to Palestinians everything that was done to him by the Soviets—but that's another story. The point is that because there's been this consensus from left to right, with the exception of a tiny minority of non- or anti Zionist Jews in Israel—I can probably name *all* of them. Other than that, Israel's leaders have been dishonest. They've always told the people, "We must hold on to the Sinai because if we don't Israel will be extinguished. We must hold on to the Golan Heights because if we don't Israel will be extinguished. We must keep the West Bank, stay in Lebanon . . ." all of these things. And every time, they've lied to the people; they've told them these things are *essential*. Likud said, "We must settle in the West Bank because God gave it to us." Labor said, "We must settle in the West Bank because of security." They have been dishonest. After telling people for years and years that we must keep the Golan Heights, now they're telling people that they must give it back to Syria. Look at the Lebanese withdrawal. Overnight, they just turned tail and fled. And now they're talking about giving up large parts of the West Bank. But of course under conditions that are just unacceptable—keeping the roads and the settlements and the borders under Israeli control. Nevertheless, these are all considerable changes from positions that Israel has pushed forward for decades to its own people. ¶ Israel's real weakness is that it believes its own propaganda. That's making it hard to make peace. Maybe Barak—even though I don't think he's a courageous or visionary enough man—could be an Israeli De Gaulle and say, "Look, none of the settlers can stay." Or he could say, "If we want settlements in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron, fine, then we have to allow Palestinians to reclaim their homes in

Israel and to return."

Or conversely let the settlers live under Palestinian sovereignty.

Exactly, but that's not a debate which exists in Israel.

This is the settlers' biggest fear—that they'd have to live in a multiethnic Palestinian state under Palestinian sovereignty.

I've been at events where very right-wing people have come up to me—Israelis, American Jews—and they say things like "What's wrong with a Jew living in Nablus or Hebron?" I tell them "Nothing. What's wrong with a Palestinian going back to his home in Jaffa?" And then of course, complete silence. So I say, if someone wants to come and live in Hebron, and come as a neighbor, to come and live in peace, that's one thing. But if they want to come and live as a conqueror, that's quite another thing. And it doesn't matter whether they're Jewish, French, German, Indian, or anything else. They'll be resisted not because they're Jewish, but because they're a conqueror.

Historically speaking, as far as Jewish-Islamic relations are concerned, there was far less enmity between our communities than there ever was between Christians and Jews.

What enmity has existed between Jews and Muslims is largely a 20th century phenomenon, largely as a result of nationalism and Zionism. Certainly there's been enmity in this century, but before that, the history of Jewish-Muslim relations has been the exact opposite—it's been one of friendship and cooperation.

I think a lot of people on the outside of the conflict forget or are wholly ignorant of that fact, particularly when they talk about "the age old conflict" between Jews and Arabs. This is totally wrong. It's really maddening to hear such distortions.

It is maddening also because right wing sectors of the pro-Israeli Jewish community have created this idea of what they call a "Judeo-Christian" ethic.

The entire notion is ridiculous, but it's an extremely commonplace idea, even outside of

the Zionist community.

Even though both traditions are rooted in the same text, the Old Testament, the idea that there is some parallel history of mutual exchange is strange. I think one can speak much more accurately about a "Judeo-Muslim" ethic and a "Judeo-Muslim" history. Part of the future is recovering that history and making people aware that Jewish philosophy—medieval Jewish philosophy in particular—was heavily influenced by Muslim thinking; that much Hebrew poetry is influenced by Arabic poetry; and that the greatest Jewish writers and thinkers of the Middle Ages were not influenced by Arabs—they were Arabs! Their first language was Arabic, their culture was Arab, they lived in Arab societies where most people were Muslim. That history needs to be recovered.

One of the things I noted in a great deal of postings to your website is a very strong critique of the Israeli peace camp, Left-Wing Zionists in particular. What such Israeli leftists seem to want in your work is not equality but separation—this is what peace means for them—they don't want to establish a multiethnic non-Zionist state.

Yes, this is an illusion. It's unachievable. Separation: OK, they can maybe separate from Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza, but how can they separate from the Arabs who already live in Israel? Over one million of them still live there, and they're demanding equal treatment as Israeli citizens. There was a report in *Ha'aretz* yesterday or the day before about how after all the professions of contrition, after the riots and the protests back in September, all the promises made to the Arab community have still evaporated. It's back to business as usual. The promises of allocating vast new funds for the Palestinians of Israel have not been met.

Barak has totally mismanaged the government's relationship with its Palestinian constituency in a manner far worse than any of the premiers who preceded him. According to *Ha'aretz*, he hasn't met a single representative of the Israeli Palestinian community since taking office.

Right. They had coalition talks for 54 days, and Barak met with every single party that had a seat in the Knesset except the Arab parties. During the rest of his time in office he ignored them completely, and then during the riots in September, he shot them dead. Then, while I was in Jordan a few weeks ago, I saw on television news that Barak had just rushed up to the north with a few hours notice to meet with Arab notables. He took a camera crew with him to film himself eating hummus.

Yeah, in the Arab town near Barak's home in Kochav Yair.

Right. This completely backfired. In a good column in *Ha'aretz*, one Palestinian-Israeli wrote that that town is five minutes from Kochav Yair. So even when he tried, it was so transparent and so cynical that it backfired. It will be interesting to see how things like this play out in the coming election. Last time around, 95 percent of all Palestinian-Israeli citizens voted for Barak. But the difference was that first of all they had some illusion or hope that Barak would be different. Second, there was a general election for the Knesset that people were also going out to vote for the Arab parties. The questions that Israelis are now asking a lot is in an election that's just for the prime minister—and not for the parliament—whether Arabs will bother to go to the polls. And Barak cannot win without the Arab vote.

Right, and this is an especially good question to be asking when after he's done such a good job of alienating them. As far as I understand it, the Palestinian-Israeli community has the highest voting record for any community in the entire country.

It's above 80 percent.

To shift gears for a moment, I think one of the biggest difficulties that most people have in understanding Zionism is its relationship to colonialism. Is Zionism a form of colonialism or one of its symptoms that developed into something else after the Holocaust?

I think it's probably both. We have to be very clear about the context in which Zionism developed. Zionism was a

Will things get worse? Unfortunately the answer to that is yes.

response to the persecution of Jews in Europe in the mid to late 19th century, where in places like Russia, at the end of that century anti-Semitism was reaching a crescendo. Zionism was one of the products of a vigorous debate going on in Europe at that time about how to deal with the "Jewish Question."

Zionism was by no means the main response or the most popular one.

The main response was Socialism or Communism. Many Jews said, "When we're Socialists or Communists, nationality and religion will no longer be important." The other strategy was assimilation—Jews would be both French or German and Jews at the same time. A much smaller response was conversion to Christianity. ¶ The point to all this was that there was a very vigorous debate about how to respond to societies that had become increasingly hostile to Jews. Zionism was one of these responses. A lot of Jews were opposed to Zionism in the same way that, for example, African-Americans would respond to an African-American leader who stepped forward and said, "Look, we've fought for over 30 years for civil rights and it's just not working. Blacks are still poorer, they're still getting beaten up by the police, they're still getting discriminated against. We should all go back Africa and start a new state." You can imagine the amount of hostility that this would generate on the part of African-Americans because it casts doubt on their citizenship and their right to be here. This was very much the initial response to Zionism.

So how do you account for Zionism's explosive growth in the 20th century? I think it's worth explaining.

Zionism was boosted by World War II in particular. You had so many displaced persons after the war who had to go somewhere. What was notable was how countries like the US and Great Britain didn't want to take them. But to go back, when you read the early Zionist texts and

arguments, you'll see very much that what they were developing was Jewish nationalism. Jewish nationalism was modeled on other nationalisms. The logic was that if the British and the French were colonizing and developing colonies on behalf of themselves, why shouldn't the Jews?

There was a very conscious identification with that, and it wasn't seen as a bad thing at the time. The rhetoric was the rhetoric of civilizing. "We will bring the benefits of our civilization to these dark corners of the earth."

Sure. If you read Herzl's *Old/New Land*, he envisioned Tel Aviv as a new Vienna!

Right. Interestingly enough, today Jews insist on the centrality of Jerusalem. Well that's very curious. Why did they want Tel Aviv to be that place beforehand? Why was Tel Aviv then the center of Zionism? The first Zionist settlement was Rishon Le Zion, and it was nowhere near Jerusalem because Herzl didn't like Jerusalem. He associated it with everything that was old about Jews—wearing old-fashioned clothes and doing old-fashioned things. They wanted to make "new" Jews: Jews who would be agriculturalists and workers, engaged in the full panoply of trades that they hadn't had the opportunity to practice in Europe.

That doesn't exactly clear of Zionism of the longer term consequences of its naïveté, or the fact that it was an alienated response to persecution whose hand was forced by increasingly genocidal circumstances in Europe. Its historical unfolding reads more like a Greek tragedy than it does anything else.

There is some argument about Zionism's relative innocence. Did it know that it would end up doing terrible things to the Palestinians? I believe that it didn't. I think that in the early Zionist texts, the Arabs are talked about in the same way that the British talked about Indians. "Either they come along with us or we're quite justified in pushing them out of the way. But they certainly don't have any rights. They certainly can't determine for themselves what they want. The choices are to

go along with our civilizing plans or to move out of the way."

Coming back to the present day, where do you think things will go from here? With Ariel Sharon's re-emergence as a possible replacement for Barak and with George W Bush taking the reigns here in the States, are things going to get worse? What steps do you think need to be made to achieve peace?

Will things get worse? Unfortunately the answer to that is yes. But that is not because Barak is likely to be replaced with Sharon. Some Palestinians genuinely believe that Sharon might be better for Palestinians because at least when he violates their rights, the world is more likely to criticize Israel than when Barak's supposedly "dovish" government is in power. It is also hard to see how anyone could be much more brutal than Barak has been—but then Sharon actually has been *more* brutal, so in that sense he could be worse. Most Palestinians don't think that it makes a difference *who* is the Israeli prime minister. ¶ In order to achieve a lasting peace, Israeli society needs to be *ready* for peace and needs to recognize that Palestinians are human—then perhaps they will elect a Prime Minister who holds those values. So we have to continue with some sort of direct engagement with Israelis who want peace based on justice. This is the kind of alliance that existed between white and black South Africans to undermine the racist system from within. We also need international solidarity. There needs to be a people's peace process based on these values. ¶ As for the US role, it is hard to imagine a role more destructive than Clinton's unquestioning, slavish adoption of Israeli positions over the past eight years. There is a chance—albeit a slim one—that Bush will restore some balance to US policy. As long as the United States protects Israel from the consequences of its actions, there will never be peace for Israelis or justice for Palestinians. In a way, Israel is like a drunk driver, harming itself and others. If the United States was a true friend, it would step in and take away the keys instead of filling up the beer glass and paying for the gas. ©

the underground speaks for itself:

Black Flag
Kathleen Hanna
Noam Chomsky
Sleater-Kinney
Thurston Moore
Jello Biafra
Frank Kozik
Ian MacKaye
Steve Albini
Ruckus Society
Winston Smith
Porcell
Jody Bleyle
Mordam Records
Los Crudos
Negativland
Matt Wobensmith
Chumbawamba
Central Ohio Abortion
Access Fund
Art Chantry
Ted Leo
Jem Cohen
Voices in the
Wilderness
Duncan Barlow
Jon Strange



WE OWE YOU NOTHING

punk planet: the collected interviews

out now in finer bookstores everywhere or direct from www.akashicbooks.com or www.punkplanet.com

Sammiam



For all of its popularity, VH1's *Behind the Music* series follows a pretty standard formula: Band starts. Band gets popular, usually too quickly. Band endures the complications and entanglements of success (drug and/or alcohol habits begin or intensify). A band member or someone close to him: a) suffers from a destructive drug/alcohol habit, b) dies, c) comes close to dying or e) all of the above. Band gains new perspective. Band presses on, even after its peak popularity, insisting it's making its best music yet.

We snicker at our screens at the has-beens and their inflated senses of self-importance because *none* of them are making good music anymore.

You can imagine what *Behind the Music: Samiam* would entail. Mainstream popularity has eluded the California five piece, even after they signed to a major label and received radio play. They survived their fair share of setbacks. After dropping the band, Atlantic Records prevented the release of *You Are Freaking Me Out*, the follow-up to their major-label debut, until another label reimbursed Atlantic for the cost. Waiting.

After the record's release in the United States, Samiam's new label, Ignition, shut its doors. Samiam's contract with Ignition precluded any immediate movement to another label. More waiting—which stripped the band to its three original members: vocalist Jason Beebout and guitarists James Brogan and Sergie Loobkoff.

As far as the other *Behind the Music* hardships go: Death of friends? Yes, see "Dull" on the new record. Alcohol? Let's just say Samiam's reputation for alcohol consumption is celebrated. Perspective? Oh yeah.

If this were *Behind the Music*, this is the point where the band would be writing music that's a watered-down version of its glory days. But this isn't *Behind the Music*, and Samiam still write good songs.

With a new lineup (featuring Johnny Cruz on drums and Sean Kennerly on bass), a new record, *Astray*, and a new label (Hopeless Records/Burning Heart), Samiam is getting their, uh, fourth wind and discovering life really can begin after 30.

story by **Kyle Ryan**
photos by **Sally Washburn**

It seems like the past six years have been characterized by a lot of waiting.

James: Being close friends helped us. When we hit low, we hit really low, and we never once said, "I quit." We just said, "Well there's only up from here." It'd be different if we had the rockstar gleam in our eyes.

Sergie: If I depended on Samiam for my livelihood or identity 100 percent, I would have gone crazy. It's only a part of me—it was a big bummer, but that's about it.

But it's definitely affected the writing process and keeping members.

Jason: I don't think it slowed us down writing; it slowed us down in that we didn't follow through with recording the things we wrote. The thing it affected the most was my and everyone else's view of the band.

Sergie: Samiam isn't a huge lucrative thing, so it's hard to keep people involved in that respect. The thing is with the people who have always been in Samiam, for better or worse, Samiam's always been this thing we've been married to.

How did working with Hopeless come about?

Jason: Sergie engineered the whole Hopeless thing. We were at a point where we've been on a couple labels now and know how lame it can be to be on the wrong one. No one was in a big hurry to get on the wrong one. With Hopeless, it became clear they're pretty well organized.

Sergie: I do graphic design, and I had done a lot of work for Hopeless and pretty much was friends with Darren and the guys that work at the label. But it never occurred to me to send a demo out to them because our relationship never touched on Samiam.

You guys have experienced both independent and major labels. Have you closed the door on majors?

Sergie: I think we kind of realized it wasn't necessarily the smartest thing. It's not like we said, "Major labels are evil, and we're not going to do that." But in the same respect, we're skeptical about it now.

But this isn't *Behind the Music*, and Samiam still write good songs.

I think the songs are kind of an amalgamation of things we've been trying lately, and what we've been doing in the past was a vision we weren't all clear on.



Regardless of their experiences with major labels, bands always talk about one big positive: time. They had the funds to make the record they wanted. Do you feel rushed again?

Sergie: No, because we're on Hopeless and Burning Heart, they sort of ponied up the money to split the costs, and we had a good budget for this record.

Jason: We actually spent more time on this record than we ever have.

James: With our second record, we were slotted in between two bands, and for us it could have been a trillion dollars we were paying; at that time—it was a lot of money to us. It was way down in LA, and we were never rushed for time more in our lives . . . It just makes a world of difference after, when you go back and you're like, "God, I wish I would have done this, and I wish I would have done that."

You haven't used the same producer on any of your records. You worked with Tim O'Heir this time. How was that?

Sergie: For us, a producer helps us with arranging our songs and has expertise with all the machinery, but probably the main thing is the cheerleader aspect—the guy that's not in our band that tries to coax the best performance out of us. ¶ We have this dynamic in the band where it's hard to criticize each other, so it's good to have a guy like Tim who can say those things. I can say things really diplomatically, but someone can look right through it and say, "What you're really saying is 'That's shitty.'" A third party can say that, and you can't go, "Hey listen, motherfucker . . ."

James: It's always a pleasure to work with a producer that's actually into your band and knows what you're talking about and is on the same wavelength.

It seems the result is a record that picks up where *You Are Freaking Me Out* left off.

Sergie: To me, it's like every record is pretty much the same as far as our attitude. We've never said, "This is going to be a faster record" or "This is going to be a mellower record." ¶ Someone will say, "I liked you guys back on your first couple of records because that's when it was punk rock," but I don't want to burst your bubble, but the reason it's more "punk rock" is because A) we didn't have enough time to work on it, and B) we were in shitty studios.

Jason: I think the songs are kind of an amalgamation of things we've been trying lately, and what we've been doing in the past was a vision we weren't all clear on.

James: We're just trying to improve. We're not trying to all of a sudden start playing with keyboards and cellos.

Astray is missing, at least overtly, a recurrent theme in Samiam songs, Jason's relationship with a physically abusive stepfather. "Home Sweet Home," "Stepson," "Factory"—what's made you revisit such a painful subject so many times?

Jason: It's something I don't think about ordinarily, and I think I'm actually kind of surprised sometimes when I relate the thing that happened to me growing up to some new situation, or it's brought to my attention a different way. Then it's like, "Oh yeah, I forgot." I don't really know how it comes out; I suppose it's one of those, "Whoa, he has some dark shit going on in his psyche," things that I'm not conscious of.

Samiam's been around for a while without any major success. Do you feel like you've had to overcome the are-those-guys-still-around syndrome?

James: We were all kind of worried when we had the opportunity to go to Europe [for *You Are Freaking Me Out*]. I was like, "Man, we haven't played in so long . . ."

We got the opposite morale wise for the band to keep going and doing things like playing out when it took a dramatic big step up in Europe. That's when I was like, "Wow, thank God we're still together."

Sergie: I get down sometimes from the perspective I get from other people like, "Oh, poor Samiam. They're playing in front of 300 people tonight, but last night Blink-182 played in front of 55,000 people." In general it's not this big bummer, and I don't expect really too much of anything. And more than that, I am pretty damn happy for what Samiam has brought to me.

How have you avoided burnout when other, younger bands get huge so quickly when you're in your mid-30s looking for a label?

Jason: We avoid burnout by basically avoiding what we don't like to do. I don't care personally where the band goes now. There's a kind of weightlessness to this, and we do pretty much anything we want without too much effort. It's a comfortable place, and we probably wouldn't have gotten there if things had been smoother for us.

James: I think we still had it in us.

Jason: Everywhere we go, people e-mail us the day after saying, "Oh my God, I didn't know you were still together. When are you coming back to Chicago?" Maybe we should promote ourselves a little bit more. As long as we can get back into the swing of things of doing a record a year, which is what I'm sure we all want to do, and as long as we can keep our members together, and Hopeless doesn't implode, I'd rather just start fresh as we could start. Some bands handle success really well, but I don't think we would have been one of them. I think I'm a better position now to appreciate the things that went wrong. ☺

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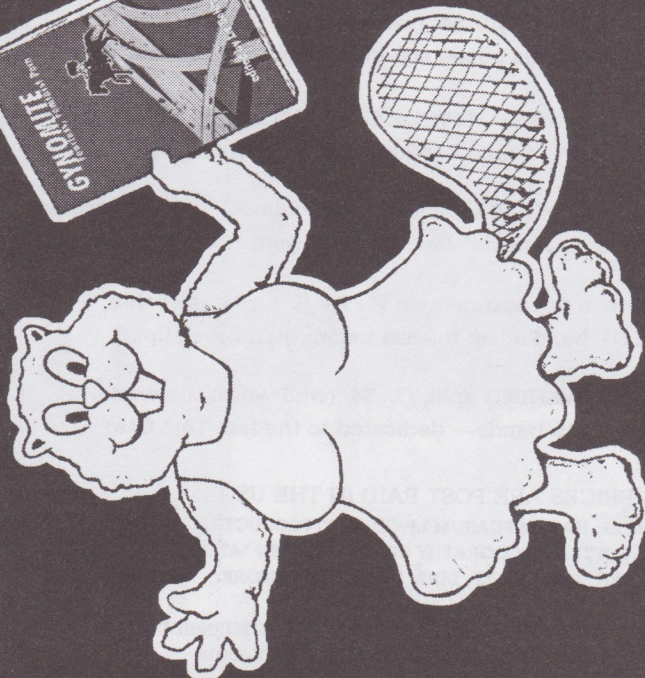
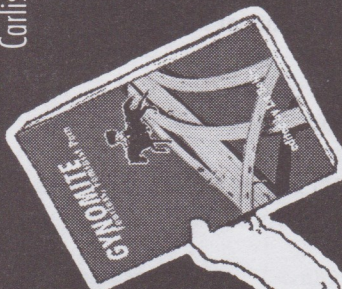


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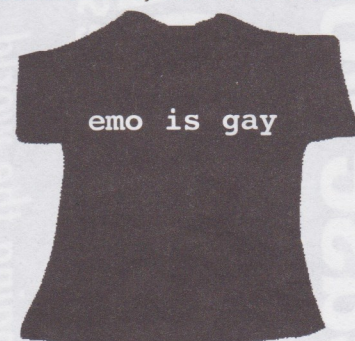
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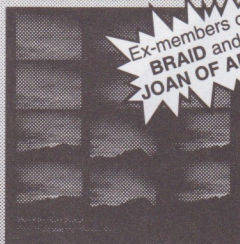
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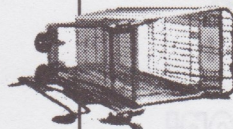
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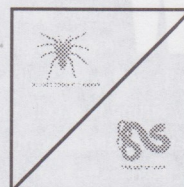
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FINDING LIFE ON DEATH ROW

With the moratorium here in Illinois and the Texacutioner in the White House, a lot has been written about the death penalty lately. But one thing that has been left out is voices from inside death row. There are plenty of lawyers, activists, law enforcement officials, and politicians weighing in about the rights and wrongs of execution. But it's rare to hear from someone actually sitting in a cell about the life he or she leads behind bars. Sure, there are stories written about innocent people that have been falsely accused—stories that concentrate mainly on the facts surrounding their case. But you hardly ever read about what it's like to wake up in the morning in a cage, knowing the reason you are there is to die. Of course proving people's innocence is *incredibly* important work—if it wasn't for the thankless crusade of too few people in Illinois, the state would still be executing people instead of reexamining the process. But equally important is to talk to the innocent as well as the guilty about their lives, their hopes, and their experience.

That is what we set out to do with this series of interviews. We talked with a half-dozen death row inmates from around the country—many guilty a few innocent—about the life they lead. The conversations were brutally honest and ranged from angry diatribes against the treatment of inmates to peaceful discussions about reading, painting, and life on the “outside.” The conversations were wildly different from each other—so much so that it was often difficult to transition between calls—but there was a single common thread that held them all together: the hunger for a voice. Each of the men we talked to welcomed us breathlessly, speaking quickly to fit everything into their time-restricted calls. Some of them almost interviewed themselves, leaving us with little to do but record their monologues. Witnessing this was both exhilarating and saddening. While it's exciting to be embraced so readily, the fact that these guys were so starving for an outlet was disturbing. Because when all the reporters put their pens down, when all the activists stop their chants and when the lawyers stop filing their briefs, shouldn't these people's voices continue to be heard? Isn't *that* the purpose of all this work?

Unfortunately, not everyone thinks so. Once all the interviews were transcribed and edited, they were sent on to the inmates' lawyers for a final OK. For the most part, that OK never came. On one hand, a lawyer's trepidation to hand his or her client's words over to a reporter is understandable: it could jeopardize cases or make an already volatile environment even more so. But to refuse publication even after being promised that their clients would have *full* anonymity—interviews would be edited to cloak location, age, race and other identifying factors—seems to do a disservice to the work that needs to get done. It raises a question of what's important: protocol or people. Unfortunately, for many of the interviews we performed, protocol won out.

Luckily, there were enough lawyers pleased to work with us that what still remains is a unique and revealing look at life after death has been handed down by a judge or jury. Two of the interviews that follow are with men currently living under a sentence of death. Both of these men, Renaldo Hudson, and an anonymous Inmate are unique in that they have achieved a level of peace both with themselves and the place that they live in—their stories of how they've managed to arrive at that state are fascinating. The final interview is the Illinois resident Gary Gauger, who in 1994 was falsely accused of his parent's murder and sentenced to death. Thanks to the tireless work of Northwestern University law professor Larry Marshall, Gary is a free man today and runs an organic farm in northern Illinois.

While Gauger talks extensively about the crime he was accused of, we have decided not to reveal the crimes of the other inmates we spoke with. To do so, we feel, only serves to cloud an already difficult terrain. It is easy to create a false impression that *everyone* on death row is innocent. That is not our intention. Many, if not most, of the people living on death row are guilty of the crimes they committed. But because a person is guilty—even of brutal crimes—doesn't mean that they're not a person. Our intention was to give a voice without passing judgement. Hopefully you can read these interviews in a similar way. It's a rare chance to hear voices usually shut out from the death row debate—voices that *desperately* need to be included.

By Daniel Sinker and Jeff Guntzel

Illustration by Aya Muto



FINDING LIFE ON DEATH ROW

"If you turn your light on in the darkest of darkest will see that light and you can possibly lead them to

Renaldo Hudson

Renaldo Hudson's journey behind prison walls is an amazing one. He began his time there as a young gangbanger hell-bent on testing the limits of the system. Over the many years he's spent there, he's learned to achieve a certain level of peace within an environment that doesn't make that decision an easy one. This interview starts with Renaldo explaining why it's OK for us to use his name.

Personally, I don't have any problems with my name being used because I want to be known as a person. I think that's half the problem with the death penalty—people are afraid to put faces on us. That allows people that want to execute us more power to be able to do it, because there's not a human face there. I understand that they say some things are for legal protection, but the reality is that if I'm dead, that legal protection won't do me any good.

That's very true. What's life like for you there?

In all honesty, it's a living hell. It's a torture, even for the guilty. It's a constant reminder that you're under a sentence of death. I think it would be more humane if someone just walked up to me and shot me in the head. The way it exists now, it's like someone having a pistol and placing it against your head and every 20 minutes or so, just pop the trigger. They never remove it from your head, they just follow you around 24 hours a day reminding you at any time we can pull the trigger. That's one illustration of the frustration and the reality of being here. ¶ Another is that you're constantly reminded that you're nothing. If you can't raise above what everyone else is saying about you, then you end up either going crazy or staying in segregation for rebelling against being defined by someone else. ¶ So by the grace of God, I was personally able to recognize that it's more important to define *myself* than it is to allow my circumstances to define me. And in that process, I started to work towards rehabilitating myself because I was in charge of the way I perceived what was being done to me and *why* it was being done.

I'm curious how you arrived at that point.

I had assaulted an officer—because of the frustration. I don't want to make any excuses for my actions, because they were wrong, but at the same time when you're frustrated, you look for ways to vent that frustration. The officer ended up being assaulted—I threw some hot liquid on that officer, so you understand what I mean by "assaulted"—because I was frustrated, angry and out of control. ¶ That evening, the warden came to my cell and said to me, "Whatever that officer did you to, Mr. Hudson, he did not deserve what you did." The guard's family was put under a lot of anguish because of my inability to control my emotions. The warden basically told me, "Do you ever think about your actions?

What if that officer came and did that exact same thing to you, how would you feel?" He slammed the steel door closed and walked away. I was 19 when I was arrested for my case. I'll be 37 this year. And that was the *first time* after all my years of being incarcerated that someone actually put my actions in my face. ¶ That helped to start the process of me considering the state of mind or the conditions of others versus just looking at my own. Once you start looking at other people's circumstances, then you're able to develop more empathy for them. Because of the lack of being able to look at others, my conduct was solely about my own selfish needs. ¶ Also a brother gave me some tapes after I was put into segregation—they was some Minister Farrakhan tapes. I was expecting to hear "the white man is the devil; that white devil; kill whitey." But in reality, Minister Farrakhan was saying the *opposite*. He was saying, "OK, we can deal with the fact that whites have done this and done that, but now let's deal with why do you do what you do? Who are you good for, or are you good for nothing?" And that helped me to start being more analytical and searching myself. I started saying, "Damn, I ain't good for nothing. I bring anger and sadness and bitterness to everyone I come in contact with." That started me thinking, "Damn, I don't want to die representing the angry black man who never learned how to love or learned how to live." That basically generated my process of what I call "self rehabilitation." I stopped waiting on someone else to change my condition and started doing things to change *myself*. And that started with first taking responsibility for my actions up to date.

How has it continued?

It's been continually getting greater and greater. When I done that, I was maybe in the top three worst of the worst death row inmates. That's my opinion and maybe someone else might differ with it, but I wasn't someone that they took lightly. But my behavior changed so dramatically, I became a trustee. Trustees used to have gallery worker jobs—the new regime that's in power now, they took away those jobs. Normally on death row, the only time you come out of the cell, you have to be in handcuffs or shackles—you don't just walk out of the cell. To be a trustee, the staff has to believe that they can trust you out of the cell without handcuffs on. I was able to walk around the unit where everyone else was locked up and pick up trash, pass out trays, clean and do all those types of things. That wasn't the kind of thing that you take lightly under the circumstances. Based upon where I had come from, it was amazing to a lot of people that they would allow me out of the cell. ¶ I have continued to change. I am no longer a member of the Nation of Islam. I became a member, but during my own process of trying to deal with who I really was and where I belong, I came to the conclusion that the gospel of Jesus Christ was the best and only place for me. So that's a continuing process that

places, no matter how deep and how far in the dark you are, people a better situation.” —Renaldo Hudson



I'm in. I'm continually learning what the gospel really means and what it means to people to know that you can come from the worst state of mind to develop a loving, kind heart even on death row. You don't have to continually be the monster that your actions may have dictated that you were.

That process is amazing.

It's something that's constantly growing; daily I recognize the responsibility that comes from taking that position. There's a backlash from the people you used to run with, where they feel that you've betrayed the cause of struggling against the system. I would walk through the unit saying "Follow the rules, follow the rules." I would remind people that if you follow the rules, you'll have less problems. Even though you gonna always find staff members, who—just like inmates—will abuse their privileges. But you don't have to submit and surrender to their mentality. If you conduct yourself a certain way, when the command staff come, they're gonna say, "Look on a consistent basis, we've seen this from this inmate." So for someone to come in and say you did certain things, it'll be questioned. But if it's always, "Yeah, he did it, he's always irritated and hard nosed or whatever," then any officer can say *anything* about you and it'll stick. Now I know that through this process, at the very least, I'm developing a sense of credibility to be able to say certain things to staff as well as inmates. ¶ It's humbling in a great sense to me because it reminds me that God can use anyone no matter where they are. No matter what state you're in, there's someone in a worse condition. You have to take the time to focus on, "What gift do I have to give back to others?" ¶ There's this little song I've always liked, "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let it Shine." I always recommend that song as my theme song, because *all* superheroes got to have a theme song! [laughs] That's my theme song because I remind people that if you turn your light on in the darkest of darkest places, no matter how deep and how far in the dark you are, people will see that light and you can possibly lead them to a better situation. That's basically where I am. And I'm continually by the grace of God moving in that direction more and more and more. ¶ I also believe that by me having my experience with the gangs, the drugs, and the gangster mentality, it gives me credibility among the people that's still living that life. I am able to come to them and say, "Look man, I know what I'm talking about; been there, done that, check this out."

You can point to yourself as an example of someone who's been able to escape that.

And that's very important to me. Whatever happens in the system, I don't know. I think God is going to bless me, but I recognize that we're all going to die. I was watching the TV yesterday and they said that 35,000 children die a day from starvation. I don't know if they

was lying or if it's true, but I know that more people will die in the so-called "free world" than will be executed, so the fear of execution is the last thing on my mind. Even if they let me off death row, I'm going to die. You can not sentence me to death, I'm already sentenced to death. In the scriptures, as Paul says, "Whether I live or die, I belong to the lord." That's my belief. You can not hurt me. I can only hurt myself by not following what God has inspired me to do. And I believe that God has inspired me to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the only way I can do that is to have a testimony, 'cause testimony is what brings people to the faith. I don't want to get too religious and too preachy, but I want to be fair, and honest, and clear that I give the credit and glory to the lord Jesus Christ and that's what's helping me to be a better man.

You wrote an open letter a few months back. In it, you talked about who you were and how you got to where you are. One thing that I thought was interesting was that very early on, you state, "I am one of the guilty." What made you decide to own up to that?

I think that's the only way you can honestly be fair with people and tell your story. You've got to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Inmate L

Because of an agreement with Inmate L's lawyer, we're not at liberty to disclose any information about him. His story, however, isn't hindered by the lack of a name—his personality, originality, and bravery show through.

What's life like in there?

It's hard waking up every day knowing you're going to die, especially by the hand of the state.

How do you deal with that?

Phew! I try to stay focused on other things. I try to stay in shape, listen to music, watch TV, paint, draw . . . I just try to keep very, very busy and make sure that time passes. That way I don't have too much time to think about everything.

I understand that you have a reputation for getting along well with most everyone there.

Yeah.

It's hard for me to imagine myself being able to do that. I feel like I'd be a lot angrier.

But where is anger going to get you? It's not going to get you anywhere but in more trouble. I'm not saying that you have to accept a lot of things, but that you have to divert your anger into other, more productive things. Such as, if you're an artist, maybe you want

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"They can keep me locked up, but mentally I'm not

to put your anger onto a piece of canvas or a piece of paper; or maybe you want to work it out in a workout. Anger is not going to get you anywhere. It's only going to get you in so much trouble that you're only going to hurt yourself even more. True enough, we're already on death row—you can't really sink much lower—but to be on death row and then stuck in seg because of some ignorance portrayed upon you that caused you to react is something else. ¶ Plus, with age comes maturity. You're able to deal with your anger a lot easier. You know how to deal with it once you've gotten a little older.

How has your approach to doing your time there changed over the decade-plus you've been there?

I came in very young. I came in at 19 years old. I came in like any other rowdy 19 year old: "To hell with authority, you can't tell me what to do." I got my share of tickets and disciplinary problems in the beginning; I was rowdy and rambunctious. But over time you see where that gets you. That goes back to the anger and how you learn to deal with your anger. I do more for myself just minding my own business and doing my thing than being angry and letting every little thing get under my skin.

I was wondering if you could walk me through what a day is like there.

I get up between 5:30 and 6:00 in the morning. Breakfast comes around 6:00. I eat my breakfast, watch the news and see what's happening for the day. I have my coffee and that stuff. I go outside and work out, or play ball or something. I come back in between 9:30 and 10:00. I shower, grab a bite to eat, then lay back, maybe take a nap, watch a movie or a little TV. Then afternoon comes and I get started: I start painting or start reading, or maybe writing a letter. Chow comes between 4:30 and 5:00. And I go to bed around 10:00 or 11:00, you know? That's pretty much the day. During that time, you listen to the radio or watch TV, you paint, draw, or read. Maybe you talk to your friends in the gallery, see what's going on out there. That's pretty much a typical day out here. Exciting, isn't it?

You make it sound like camp!

I'm waiting for the brochures to come out. [laughs]

You make it sound so much like, "That's how it is." It's kind of inspiring.

Inspiring? My life is disappearing. All of my 20s are gone, half of my 30s are gone. Should I ever get released, I will have to start at a time where most people are settling down into retirement age. I'm losing my life, literally. People my age have jobs, wives, kids, mortgages, they're maybe even putting a little something away for retirement. What do I have? I have no trade, I have no job, I have no possibility for a job. Who's going to hire me once I get out? Whose going to give me a chance? I have no work experience. I'm going to be relying and dependent on another individual to help

me, which I don't like. I don't like being dependent on other people if I can't do for myself. All that is gone from me. I'm in a little cage. I'm sure a bathroom is a lot larger than my cell. I'm treated like a child—I have to keep everything in little boxes and put these boxes under my bed before I leave my room. Then at any time I'm subject to being violated in a way that people are put in jail for doing what they do. If I come into your home and I rummage through your things, that's breaking and entering. But they're allowed to do that at will, at random, and at any time that they wish. So it's not really a pretty picture.

Even with that, you seem like you're surviving it amazingly well.

Well I *have* to survive. I have to survive because if I break down and become insane, or if I break down and still stay uneducated, or let whatever talent I may have go to waste, then wouldn't you say that they win? They break me. They can keep me locked up, but mentally I'm not locked up. I *refuse* to allow them to lock me up mentally.

You mentioned getting an education. Are you teaching yourself during your time there?

I do a lot of reading. I read whatever books I can get a hold of. Being ignorant and young is what got me here. Maybe being mature and wiser will help me, should I become released or even later on down in prison. You don't rely on that rage so much, you rely on your mind.

Your approach to this is different than some of the other guys there, I think, about keeping calm and what not. Do you counsel other guys about how to deal with it?

If I'm asked to and the cause is righteous. But sometimes there is a need for violence. Say you start having a peaceful protest because of the conditions. And then another side becomes rowdy, then you have to get rowdy back. You're not going to stand around there getting beat, are you? So sometimes I do see cause for violence, but I don't think that should be the first cause of action. I think it should be a last resort once there is nothing else left.

How do you get along with the other guys there?

I would say I get along with them pretty well.

What's communication like there? I know you can't get out of your cells and I hear a lot of yelling behind you. Is that how people communicate?

That's pretty much it. Good thing we have headphones and earplugs! [laughs]

How do you deal with the guards?

I ignore them. There are some really . . . how do you say it . . . "narrow minded" individuals that work here. Some are of the idea of, "Look, it's just a job. I'm going to come here and put in

locked up. I refuse to allow them to lock me up mentally."—Inmate L



my eight hours and I'm going home. I don't want no trouble and I'm not going to start no trouble." But then you have others that . . . probably couldn't become a cop. And so they feel since they can't become a cop and pretty much *anyone* can become a correctional officer, they're going to take out their vengeance on the inmates that are already locked up. They cuff you too tight or say things like, "I'll be there and watch you be executed," or, "everybody here deserves what they got." They write tickets for every little minor infraction they think they can get away with writing you up on. Which makes you a little . . . how do you say it . . . "apt to become angry at them," because you know they're nitpicking you. It's just a job. Why you want to take it further than a job? The state put me here. Why do you want to further torment me and torture me and harass me? That wasn't my sentence when I got sentenced here. So why you want to take your job to an extreme? Just come in, put your eight hours in, do what you got to do and go home, man, that's it! If nobody's bothering you, don't bother them. But they don't see it that way. They feel, "You all are locked up, you don't deserve anything, you don't get nothing."

How do you feel about the death penalty?

I feel that the death penalty is greatly misused. I feel that it's a political tool to further people's careers and to put down people that they feel could really embarrass them. For example, say they concoct evidence for an innocent person, of course they want him dead 'cause once he's dead, the evidence is closed and he can't dispute anything. ¶ If you look at statistics, I don't even fit the statistics. Statistics say all minority, all black, all underprivileged, and in the projects. I'm white from an upper middle class neighborhood. But I come from a very small community. And so, in a very small community, it's like, "hang him." But in a larger city, it may not have been so bad—I might not have gotten the death penalty. It's pick and choose. There's people in population doing X amount of years for more atrocious crimes than what guys are here for. Where's the fairness in that?

You said that you felt it was "grossly misused." Which is different than saying that it shouldn't exist. Do you feel that it shouldn't exist, or do you just feel that it's being used wrongly right now?

I think both.

What do you think is a better system?

I think they need to put programs back in the prisons. There are no programs in the institution anymore that can give a person a fighting chance. Guys can not prove they're innocent if they're dead. So you got to let them live to prove their innocence. Do you not agree?

I definitely agree.

Plus, if it's wrong to kill, why you trying to kill this guy? Isn't that

some kind of a double standard thing there? Just lock him up for the rest of his life. If there's no guarantee he's going to get out, he's not going to harm nobody else.

What about the idea of people getting better? That's the problem that I have. Even locking people up for the rest of their life . . . What about the people that aren't going to be a menace or whatever?

They need to install programs within the institutions to be able to find these kind of people to recommend that they be released.

Earlier, you mentioned getting out a couple times. What are your hopes about getting out?

Man, I don't know. I just got to have hope because if I don't got hope, I ain't got no reason to fight. I can not look myself in the face and say, "Man, this is your life, homey." How can I tell myself that? I've got to give myself something to fight for, otherwise I've got no reason to fight. I'm not disillusioning myself, mind you, but I have hope.

I think it's so great that you can hold onto that kind of hope in that kind of place.

I have to man, I have to.

You said you were reading stuff. What kind of stuff do you read?

I read everything from murder mysteries, to biographies, to even some anarchist material. I'm trying to teach myself German, but it's a little difficult. I have a penpal in Germany who's trying to help me. I have a few books in German that I'm trying to read. [laughs] It's a real trip.

I would imagine!

I have time, man.

When did you decide to do that?

About two or three months ago.

Was it prompted by having a penpal, or was it prompted by thinking, "Hey, why not learn German?"

Something like that. I have the perfect teacher; I have somebody that actually *knows* the language to teach me what I'm doing wrong.

So do you write back and forth in German?

I try really hard. I'm trying to teach her English and she's trying to teach me German. So we're trying to teach each other.

Do you keep in touch with people over time?

People fade. I don't disillusion myself there either. I'm locked up and they have a life going on out there. They have things to do, they have things to focus on and priorities. I'm not saying that they totally forget about me, just that the contact slowly fades

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"Most of us, a lot of us, or maybe even all of us, do When do we say 'OK, he's paid enough'?"—Inmate L

away. But it's acceptable.

I want to talk about getting out a little more. Let's say you could get out. How do you imagine your life going from there?

Man, in a *whirlwind*!

What do you mean?

I'd probably be like a little kid in a candy store. That's something that I think about a lot. What would I do first? What would I do second?

So what would you do first?

Man, go get a cheeseburger and some french fries! Go get some *real* food with *real* silverware on a *real* plate in a *real* restaurant.

What about second?

Take a nice, long, hot bath. Put on some nice clothes. And then we'll see what happens from there. [laughs]

What would you want people to understand most about you or about where you are?

That most of us, a lot of us, or maybe even *all* of us, do not stay the same person that we were when we were at trial. I am not the same little punk kid I was when I was 18. I'm older, I'm mature and hopefully I'd like to say I'm wiser. When do we say, "OK, he's paid enough"? My life does not bring back anybody. My life leaves another hole in my family's life that they have to bury. We're all somebody's son; we're all somebody's brother, uncle, father. And we're all *people* too. How can they look at families and say, "We have to kill your son"? Who are they to take away somebody else's son? They wouldn't kill their own children, would they? So why would they *ever* kill another parent's child?

Gary Gauger

On April 8th, 1993, Gary Gauger's parents were murdered on the farm where they and Gary lived. On January 11th, 1994 Gary was sentenced to die. Two years later he was freed, and a year after that publicly exonerated for the murder. It was an experience that has forever changed Gary and one that gives hope to many still sentenced to die.

How did you end up getting falsely arrested?

I lived on a farm in rural McHenry county with my parents. My dad sold motorcycles in a garage out back of the house and my mother sold rugs that my sister brought up from Central and South America. My parents had been planning a day trip to go away and look at some tractors and motorcycles in a suburb about 90 miles away. Thursday I got up, the house was quiet I thought that they'd maybe gone on the trip. When they didn't come home that night, I

knew something was wrong, but I thought they must have had an accident somewhere between here and there. I waited around the phone, but no one called. ¶ The next morning there was still no sign of anyone. A customer of my dad's walked up the driveway. He needed a motorcycle part, so we went into the garage looking for the part. There I found my dad's body—he was lying face down in a pool of blood. I thought he'd had a heart attack or a stroke—he'd had circulation problems—and fallen down and hit his head. I called 911, and the paramedics came out. They called the police and soon the police told me that foul play was suspected. ¶ About an hour later, the police requested a key for the padlock on the rug trailer in front of the house. I couldn't find one, so I told them to break it open. They did that and as soon as they broke the lock open and looked inside, they made a considerable commotion and one of the police officers pointed at me and said, "Don't let him go." I had just been standing out in the driveway trying to be helpful! I was surrounded by a couple police officers, taken to the squad car, patted down and locked inside. I was held in the squad car for about three hours. ¶ At 4:00 in the afternoon, I was transported to McHenry County Jail for questioning. I answered all of their questions until 7:00 or 7:30, when I had completely exhausted everything that I knew about my parents habits or *any* possible enemies they would have had. I asked to go home and they would not let me go—at the time I didn't realize that if you ask to go home, they *have* to let you go. 7:30 came and went, I had run out of things to say. I had kept going over and over everything I knew about my parents, their habits and what I had done for the last two days. I thought maybe if I could just pinpoint my activities to the exact minute, they would let me go. ¶ Finally, about 10:30, I asked them if I passed a polygraph, would they let me. They said yeah, so that was arranged and started around midnight. The polygraph lasted about an hour and it was very uncomfortable—you've got tight bands around your stomach. I answered all their questions truthfully and didn't seem to have a problem. I took the test and thought I'd passed it with flying colors. ¶ However, when I got back into the interrogation room and the two officers who had been doing most of the interrogation during the day came back—they were gone for about a half an hour—the interrogation took a very dark turn. They asked me what I would say if they told me they had a stack of evidence against me this tall—they indicated eight or nine inches. I said, "I'd say you were crazy." They said they had it, but they couldn't tell me what it was. They told me they couldn't lie, 'cause if they lied, they'd lose their jobs. They told me I had not passed the polygraph test—we found out later in court, that I didn't pass the polygraph test because I had scored flat lines which are associated with fatigue. They told me they had a stack of evidence against me. They said they found a bloody knife in my pocket and bloody sheets in the bedroom. They wouldn't let me lie down; they wouldn't let me cut off the interrogation. At about 2:00 in the morning, they showed me horrible, gruesome photos of my parents—their throats

not stay the same person that we were when we were at trial . . .



had been cut. The one officer was screaming at me, hollering "How could you kill the woman that gave birth to you." It was very terrible, very traumatic. ¶ Finally, for want of anything else to do—if I had killed my parents, I would want to know—I agreed to run through a hypothetical account, using the facts that they had supplied me, to try and jog my memory. That was a big mistake. Even in my weakened state, a few alarm bells went off in my mind, but I didn't know. I was very ignorant. It never occurred to me that police would lie in a situation like this just to obtain a conviction. So I went through and said that, by what they had told me, I would have gotten up in the morning, seen my mother in the rug trailer—later we found out you can't even see into the rug trailer from the house—come up behind her and cut her throat. Then I just started to cry. The whole realization that my parents had been killed and they were saying I had done it . . . This was the first time I showed emotion, and by me showing emotion, I really started to think maybe I had done it and blacked it out. I asked the one officer if that ever happened and she said yeah, that was very common in family murders that a person would black it out. I just didn't know. ¶ I wasn't thinking right. I'd been up since 9:00 the previous morning. I hadn't had anything to eat since 10:00 that night. I had 12-14 cups of coffee at the police station, I was highly over-caffinated. I was a mess. I really was. I had gone into emotional shock when I saw my dad's body. There is no way they could have gotten away with this if I hadn't been in such a vulnerable state. Here my parents had been murdered, and these were the cops—they're the good guys. They're supposed to solve the crime. I was being a cooperative witness, I was doing everything I could to try to clear myself as a suspect so they could investigate the killing. I lived at the farm, I was a family member and I was at the scene of the crime—I could see why they considered me a suspect. I was really susceptible to suggestion at this point. But after I ran through this hypothetical, I told them I had absolutely no memory of this. ¶ After that, they sat one on each side of me in the interrogation room. They did not give me even a second of independent thought. One would be saying "You did it, we know you did it." I'd look up and they'd say, "There! We can see it in your eyes. The machine wouldn't lie. We have the evidence." I'm crying . . . this went on for an hour or an hour and a half. They just bombarded me one in each ear about how I had done this. ¶ Finally, after about an hour and a half of this, they decided that we'd work on a motive. I couldn't think of any reason why I would have killed my parents. We tossed around a couple lame ideas, but nothing made any sense. Finally, we decided it must have been that yeah, I was an alcoholic—I was a binge drinker. My parents didn't like my drinking, it was hard on my health, my dad's sister died from alcoholism. So we decided that must be it. I didn't know. ¶ About 5:30, an officer came downstairs with a prison outfit in a bag. They said the clothes they gave me were street clothes even though it was cotton shoes, no laces, cotton pants and a white cotton shirt that says "McHenry County Jail" on the back. The officer that brought the

clothes started questioning me. He said, "Gary, we just want to hear what you did the other morning." And just for a moment, I had this flood of relief—I thought these guys had made this all up as part of the investigation. So I started to tell him: I slept late, I made a sandwich, I went to work . . . He just got up and started hollering, pointing at me and saying, "We don't want to hear that! We just want to hear about you killing your parents!" I couldn't take it anymore. They wouldn't let me sleep, they wouldn't let me lie down, they said I had killed my parents and that they couldn't lie. I ran through the hypothetical account again and immediately upon finishing I said that I wouldn't sign a confession because I had absolutely no memory about this. That didn't seem to bother them. ¶ About 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning, other people who hadn't been privy to the whole conversation were coming in and out of the room, and I'm crying that I had killed my parents. I'm thinking wait a minute . . . people that hadn't been through this indoctrination the night before hearing me saying this could be construed as evidence—I needed a lawyer. Plus, I wanted the thing to end—it just wasn't ending, we were 22 hours into it. I said, "I guess I need a lawyer." They put all their papers in a folder and said, "That's it, we're done." That was the only time I was ever interrogated about the murder of my parents, even though an autopsy three hours later showed that all the details the police fed me earlier in the night had been false. The only thing they got right was the fact that my parents had been killed.

What was your trial like?

I had a team of paid lawyers who were charging me at a rate of \$400 an hour, and I thought I'd be found not guilty. I testified in court, I told them exactly what happened in the interrogation. The police's testimony, I went back over the trial testimony just a few months ago and I counted approximately 150 instances where the police officers perjured themselves. Some of it was really obvious, like saying they gave me street clothes when they gave me a prison outfit, stuff like that. I didn't see how a jury could possibly convict me. But they deliberated less than three hours before finding me guilty. I was subsequently sentenced to death by the judge. ¶ I stayed in McHenry county, where we ran post-trial motions for eight months until the motions were exhausted. No investigation of the murder ever took place. I was fearful for my sister and her husband's life—they were living at the farmhouse where my parents were killed. We didn't know why they were killed. There was no investigation. ¶ Finally, one of my friends noticed that there was a seminar at Northwestern University in Chicago on wrongful convictions featuring Rolondo Cruz—Larry Marshall had just won him a new trial. My friends went down there in a blinding snowstorm in February to make contacts. It was through that initial meeting and subsequent letters that Larry agreed to take my case. ¶ The day Larry came down to McHenry county to take my case in September, he had talked to the judge and later

FINDING LIFE ON DEATH ROW

"I really thought that once this got out of the county and loose. I had no idea how our legal system works. I did

that same day the judge reversed his decision and gave me natural life without parole—I'm sure to take some of the scrutiny off the case. But by then, Larry had agreed to take my case and he stayed with me. It actually worked in my favor that I was under the sentence of death because if I had gotten a life sentence, Larry just didn't have the man power to look at it—he could only look at death cases. ¶ But he took the case and Larry Marshall and 60 of his students put some 2,000 hours into my appeal. It was through that appeal that my conviction was overturned and what the police called a "confession" was thrown out. Without the confession, the prosecution said they would not retry me, even though they thought had the guilty guy. They also would not reopen the investigation. That was in June of 1996. I was finally freed in October of that year. ¶ But the thing is, the prosecution already knew as early as September of '95 that the federal government's Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms division had gotten a mole into the Wisconsin Outlaws motorcycle gang. They had taped conversations with these members discussing the murder of my parents. One of them was bragging about how he could write a book about committing the perfect crime. Eventually, that led to my exoneration in June of 1997, when a 34 count indictment against 17 members of the outlaws gang broke and I was *finally* publicly exonerated. It had been some 13 months since the prosecutors office *already* knew there was this ongoing investigation and they had evidence that these other people had done it. Yet they vigorously fought our appeal and held me in jail. They did *everything* they could to hide this. They are *still* trying to tie me somehow to the Outlaws, but they just can't do it.

What was it like, after the interrogation, when all of a sudden it dawned on you, "Wait, I'm not getting out of here."

I was really naïve. I really thought the first month I was in prison, what would happen was that a supervisor would look at the case and say, "Wait a minute, nothing is written down, there's no motive." I thought the police would explain how they got their confession. I really thought it was just a big misunderstanding and as soon as somebody with a little authority took a look at it, they'd just cut me loose. I was *very* naïve. ¶ It was maybe two or three days after my original booking that I realized that I had *not* killed my parents and that the police *do* lie. It took me about a week before I could begin to concentrate. I don't know if you know anyone that's been brainwashed, but it really does a number on your mind.

Once that first month had passed and you realized that no one was all of a sudden going to own up to this, how did you hold onto hope?

[laughs] I was very naïve. I really thought that once this got out of the county and into the state level, a judge would look at it, sign a paper, and cut me loose. I had no idea how our legal system works. I did not realize how difficult it is to reverse a jury decision. Once you're

convicted by a jury, the whole burden of proof shifts so that you *literally* have to prove your innocence or you won't get out. It's no longer about whether or not they have evidence against you. The jury has found you guilty. Now you *are* guilty and you have to prove your innocence. It's just a *nightmare* of a system. ¶ How did I hold together? I did the best I could: I slipped into depression, I lost weight, my vision went to hell, I got rheumatism in the hips, I froze—it's so cold in the County Jail. If you don't die, you get through it.

What was transferring from the county jail to Statesville like?

I had *never* seen *anything* like this. Oh my god. First we go to Joliet, which is the clearing house where everyone that gets sent downstate goes to Joliet and gets assigned to whatever prison they're going to go to. I was at Joliet for almost two weeks and I saw some of the ugliest things I had *ever* seen in my life. There was almost a big riot in the chow room one day. A bunch of guys were up on the table flashing gang signs—it was pretty hairy. ¶ What was going through my mind? I was *scared*, man. I didn't know what was going to happen. But I was just numb. I had been put through the wringer. I didn't care anymore. There was nothing I could do about it. I probably felt a lot like some of the Jews being led to the showers, although not that extreme. They had seen their comrades beaten and killed, they were starved; they're being killed and there was nothing they could do about it. You become numb. You lose all emotion and you become numb to it all.

Once Marshall had signed on to your case, did you think, "I'll be out of there next week!" Or had you resigned yourself to your fate?

It was like we were surrounded by the Indians and here comes the cavalry. I was going to be saved! But then on one of his first talks with me, in the visiting room at Statesville, he said, "We'll get you out of here Gary, there's some good courts at the federal level. It might take four to six years, but we'll get you out." I'm thinking, four to six years in *this*? I couldn't comprehend it.

But it was only two or three years, right?

It was quick . . . I mean, it wasn't quick when I was there. Jail time is hard time. They talk about hard time, but the words are hollow. It's *hard* time. You wake up in the morning, the days are long and slow—and that's if you're lucky. When you're not on lockdown, you witness these beatings and intimidation. Fights break out and the guards start shooting into the ceiling. The first month I was there, every other day it seemed there be fights or disciplines. ¶ To get to chow hall, you had to walk down three flights of stairs. There was a landing between the third and second story where the disciplines were carried out. You'd go down there and there'd be three guys standing on the landing and you know why they're there. You walk through them and you just hope they don't grab you. Sometimes you get there and they're beating somebody, sometimes you get

into the state level, a judge would look at it, sign a paper and cut me not realize how difficult it is to reverse a jury decision.”—Gary Gauger



there and somebody's already been beaten and he's laying there. You can't help the person and you can't interfere in the fight because you're taking on the gangs. Ninety-eight percent of the people in Statesville Prison were hooked up with gangs.

Were you able to connect with anybody there?

I made friends. The neutrons all hung out together—"neutrons" are guys that weren't hooked up with gangs. What was going on at Statesville at the time was that if you weren't hooked up in one of the gangs, the gang members would throw you out of general population. You go into your cell and the guy says, "You can't stay here." So what do you do? You go out into the hall and the guard says "Get back in your cell." I've seen guards literally jump on a guy with their knees and throw a guy in the cell. And then your cellie is liable to beat you up and throw you back out. I was just lucky I ended up in PC first without having to go through that. I ran into an orderly in the hall and he said, "You're going into PC aren't ya?" I said, "I don't know, the counselor talked me into trying general population 'cause PC was full." But he explained to me what was going on. That was a stroke of luck. I was not in *any* shape to take anything that stressful at that moment.

What does PC stand for?

Protective Custody. You either had guys that weren't in any gangs, or you had guys that were in so much trouble that they had to go to PC or they'd be killed by somebody else in one of the other buildings. So you had some of the worst troublemakers and you had a lot of the guys that were just lost. So yeah, I made some friends while I was in there.

Was there ever a time where you accepted that the rest of your life may be spent behind bars?

My sister did. She would come and visit me every Christmas and she had resigned herself that she might be coming down there every year until she was 80 and one of us died. But I always thought I was going to be released—maybe I was living with rose colored glasses. ¶ There *was* a point that it got really dark. When I was in County Jail, I imagined what it was like to strap you to a gurney and kill you. But there's nothing you can do. You're pretty much helpless. You just sit in a cage, the guards tell you to go somewhere and you go somewhere. You do this every day and you try to stay out of trouble as best you can.

What was finally getting out like?

It was great. It's like being set *free*. I can't describe it any other way.

Was it hard to re-adapt to living a normal life?

Yeah. I still haven't adapted. I avoid people as much as I possibly can—I used to be quite gregarious. I'm not the same person I was.

It's changed me. But it's been five years now and time does heal wounds. I'm adapting fairly well compared to some of the guys that were in there for longer periods, particularly for guys that actually sat on death row proper. That's a horrible place. That's torture. That is just plain *torture*.

What about the guys that did kill your parents. What happened to them?

They were two members of the Outlaws and they acted independently, not on orders of the president. Apparently they just got some idea that my parents had large quantities of cash stashed around the farm, so they decided to rob them. In the course of discussing it, they thought it would be better to kill my parents so that there wouldn't be any witnesses. One of the guys, the guy that killed my mother, turned states witness. He issued an 80 or 90 page confession detailing his three and a half years with the Outlaws, including some 12 pages devoted to how they had killed my parents. He's yet to be sentenced. His sentencing is coming up in march sometime now. The rest of them have all been convicted—they got life without parole.

How do you feel about that?

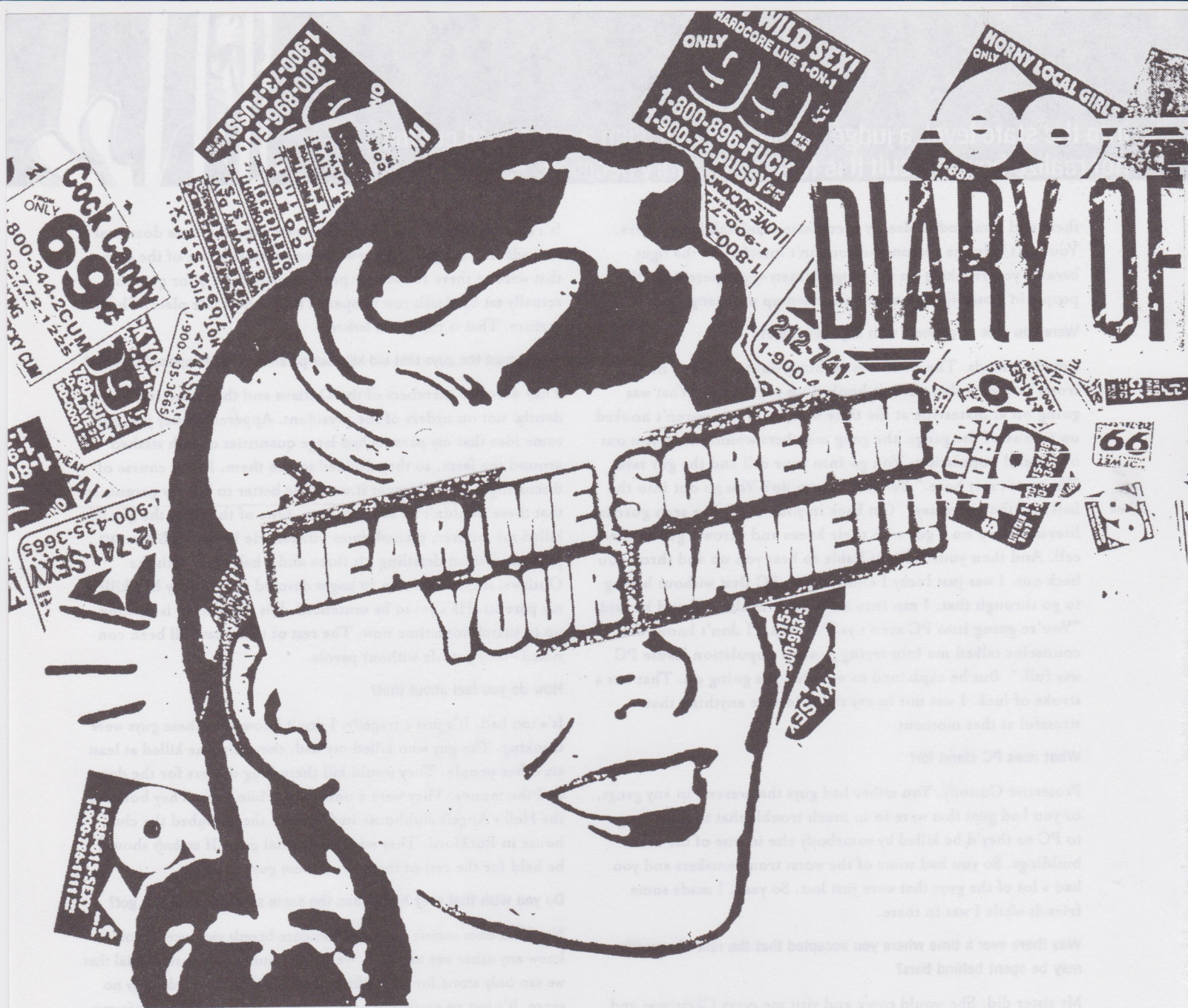
It's too bad. It's just a tragedy. I don't know what these guys were thinking. The guy who killed my dad, they think he killed at least six other people. They would kill their drug dealers for the dope and the money. They were a one-man crime wave. They bombed the Hell's Angels clubhouse in Chicago; they bombed the clubhouse in Rockford. They were just brutal guys. If *anybody* should be held for the rest of their lives, these guys should.

Do you wish that they had gotten the same sentence that you got?

No. That does society no good. Violence breeds violence—I don't know any other way to put it. We say that human life is so special that we can only atone for it by killing somebody? It makes *absolutely* no sense. It's just an escalation of violence. David Radcliff, a professor of statistics at the University of Miami, has compiled extensive work that shows a brutality effect: States that have the death penalty in the month of an execution and the months after, the murder rate tends to go up. Not only is it not a deterrent, it *promotes* death.

How did this whole ordeal change the way you feel about the criminal justice system?

I can't say that *all* cops are bad or that *all* prosecutors are bad—I've met *some* good cops and prosecutors. Obviously, they're not all bad guys, but the guys that *do* bend the system for personal gain, they hide behind the respectability. People want to believe the cops are straight and they want to believe the prosecutors are straight. But it was not the *McHenry County Sheriff's Department vs. Gary Gauger* at the trial, it was *The People of Illinois vs. Gary Gauger*. So actually, the people of Illinois framed me. ©



This is excerpted from my diaries kept during four months of making a living as a phone sex operator in New York. I'd like to say that it was done purely in the spirit of research, but that's not completely true. At the time, I didn't tell many people what I did, half because I didn't want them to ask me any probing questions about it, and half because I was ashamed at how little money I was making.

WEEK ONE

Monday

First night on the job. Surprisingly, this seems to be the evening of choice for credit-card waving, cum-loaded callers to loose their fluids upon the new and the unsuspecting. First caller played shy, wanting a blow-job but asking for a fuck, his voice cracking like a 13-year-old's. After a bit of moaning and coaxing

on my part, he tells me he wants me to "stroke it with your tongue." Almost choked on my bagel pretending it was a real cock. Vegetable cream cheese is still lodged somewhere in larynx. Earned a fond pat on the shoulder from supervisor, who can't be fewer than 300 pound—she polishes off a bag of Doritos and a two-liter bottle of cheap cola for breakfast.

Tuesday

Second day on the job, and the last day of my "trial period." Since most of the other operators have the good sense to be shooting up in the bathroom or tooting blow out of castoff pixie stix when the inevitable flood of calls comes in, I do four in a row, all straight up, around the world, suck-fuck combos. Caller

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by Alyson Mead

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number two is a big guy with respiratory problems, judging from his breathing, and wants to slap my face when he ejaculates in my mouth and watch the cum fly across the room "like you know you like it." I imagine the white blobs moving in slow motion for him, and his pleasure is evident as he exhales, hard, and loses it. Caller three makes me get on all fours and beg to have his cock in my mouth. Then he jams it in so far my tonsils are a distant memory. He likes it when I make gagging sounds, and groans once, like a dying wildebeest, and blows his load. Pizza for lunch.

Wednesday

Have earned the supervisor's "stamp of approval," which is essentially an index card with my name in badly-rendered calligraphy and one gold star on it, which I promptly tack up in my cubicle. It means I've managed to make it through three whole days without vomiting anywhere or provoking anyone into hanging up. I vow to take up drugs one day, just to have something to do in the bathroom besides talking to Carolann about her boyfriend in jail. At one point, I look over to find supervisor fingering a dangerous, white-headed zit while panting into the phone about the "big, throbbing vein" on some guy's dick. ¶ First pee call. As soon as I pick up the phone, the guy reprimands me for drinking so much water after gym class and tells me I can't hold it all in. Playing along, I hold the phone over a styrofoam cup while pouring water into it. He explodes in minutes when I tell him I'm lapping it all up with my tongue. ¶ Supervisor confides to me in the bathroom that the girls who make the most money are the ones who keep callers on the line the longest, so I should try not to make them cum so fast. Duly noted. Afternoon spent drawing out the simplest sentences until I sound like

Truman Capote on quaaludes. AT&T would be proud. Can I afford stock on my paycheck?

Thursday

This is starting to feel normal, which scares me. The walls seem familiar and comfortable, and at one point I reach out to stroke the nap of them to make sure they're really there. ¶ Badly shaken after first rape call. Caller wants me to leave bedroom window open accidentally/on-purpose so he can don a black stocking over his face and climb inside. His breath coming in quick, athletic bursts, he tells me, in detail, how he will rip my clothing, tie me to the bed, bite my nipples off and pound my pussy until it's raw. I signal to the supervisor to listen in when he starts talking knives and disfigurement, then end the call as quickly as possible, promising to never wash his cum off and welcoming him to climb in my window any night he wants, since I can't live even five more minutes without his big, hard cock. Afterwards, supervisor let me take a fifteen-minute break, which I spent hyperventilating on the fire escape. Manhattan looks like a carpet of lights and smoke from up here.

Friday

Almost the weekend. Plan a night drinking with friends, who are dying to know what men ask me for on the phone. They think I get to have sex all day, and cannot be convinced that what I do is not quite as genitally satisfying as all that. Supervisor frowns on personal calls and passive-aggressively makes me take five in a row, an almost unheard-of punishment. Carolann thinks she has a crush on me. ¶ Almost break my chair bouncing up and down on it because my caller likes the squeaky bedspring sounds it makes. Don't have the heart to tell him that, if we're really supposed to be fucking on a Las Vegas blackjack table, bedsprings would be nowhere in evidence. My breasts start to hurt from all the self-massaging. ¶ Between calls, I plan a vacation in Hawaii, imagining, probably falsely, that no one there has a cock. Or a mouth. Boyfriend wants me to start telling him stories in bed, so I figure the bastard should pay. His job is fuckin' easy by comparison.

WEEK TWO

Tuesday

Tired. Having Monday as a day off is only partially satisfying, since everyone else I know is bike messengering or pizza baking or message taking somewhere else. I walk around the city feeling frighteningly tiny against the background of immense buildings shooting straight into the sky. Imagine countless gallons of semen squirting from the top of them, dousing elderly ladies with their carts loaded with groceries and the businessmen moving ever forward with their folded up newspapers. ¶ Carolann has the day off,

and will take a train to Ossining, where she'll spend the day sitting across a table from her boyfriend, dreaming of the tiniest touch from him, her mind converting the black hairs on his thick forearms to the dense thatch between his legs. Then she will conjure him inside her, so she can hold him closer, while appearing to listen to his problems and his upcoming appeals. On the train home she will cry in the bathroom, try in vain to make the wetness between her legs disappear, then visit her dealer as soon as she disembarks, to gain something that will superimpose black over everything else. The color of forgetting. ¶ Me? I take calls at work like an automaton, wondering if frigidity is hereditary or environmental, and if anyone has ever undertaken what would surely be a landmark study.

Wednesday

Supervisor calls me into her "office," which is little more than a small area in one corner, cordoned off with beige cubicle walls, the kind you get at Staples—good to know that prison can be bought. Between mouth-distending bites of an enormous bear claw, she warns me against losing my momentum, my drive to succeed in this business. Because managerial positions are frequently distributed to those star operators who spank the most monkey, close their ears to the most insults, and barricade their hearts against everyfuckingthing. Temptation arises, to tell her of my greater desire: to graduate to full-on whoredom, to stop hiding behind these headphones, and take it old school, to the streets, with the common man. She licks her fingers like she's cleaning individual puppies while I tell her that her words are well taken and return to my broken chair. ¶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, spanking and bondage calls dominate the evening. As they whip and humiliate me, or have me do the same to them, I daydream about the men on the other end of the line, specifically how they've chosen to decorate their apartments. Ikea, Jennifer Convertibles, Macy's White Sale? Hopefully, they've got taste to go along with the bank they're making. Cause that shit isn't cheap. Have you priced a leather ball gag recently?

Friday

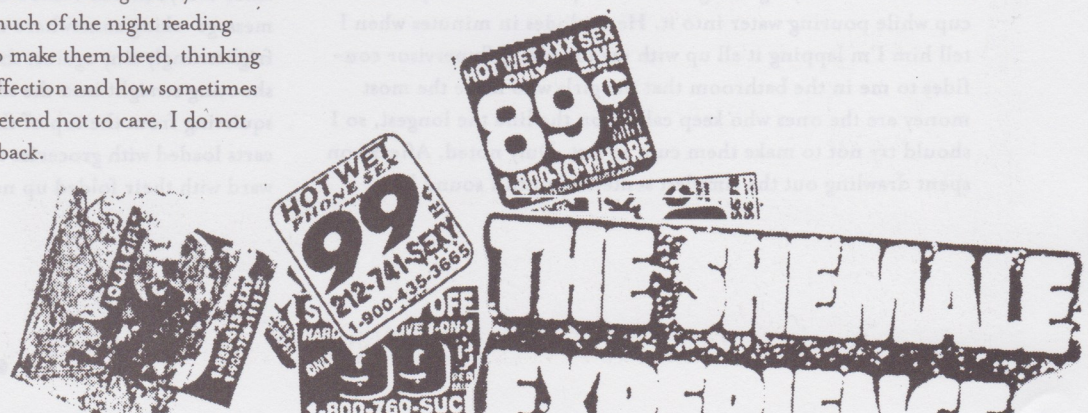
Nothing better to do, as my boyfriend has left for a short tour of the south with his band. It's six in the morning when we say goodbye, on the corner of 5th and A, and I tell him not to come back without two tickets to Hawaii if he ever wants to see my snatch again. Though it was meant to sound jokey, it comes out threatening and he looks at me weird before he gets into the van, clutching a travel mug of coffee. Like he wouldn't waste two seconds with me if I were snatchless, or boob-free or mouth-bereft. Like he would think twice about fucking some nubile against a wall backstage in any given city down there. Like he has more than three seconds to consider how fucking lonely I might be for the next two weeks. I spend much of the night reading Anaïs Nin and biting my cuticles, trying to make them bleed, thinking about the power and the pull of physical affection and how sometimes it could make a person crazy. Though I pretend not to care, I do not want to smell others on him when he gets back.

Saturday

Request night. I have become enough of a fixture that repeat callers have begun to request my services specifically. I have to choose a phone name and I go with Donna, for no other reason than that there was a girl with that name who was on our volleyball team in high school and I hated her because she would use an eyelash curler before games. I mean, does that sound right to you? Like there was going to be someone from Wilhemina sitting on the ass-aching bleachers going, "That girl's serve sucks ass, but there's something about her eyelashes . . . sign her up!" Turns out most guys in the world have grown up next door to a girl named Donna who drove their little penises to distraction but would never put out. Figures. ¶ A caller who can't be more than 16 wants to talk to me cause he likes to jerk off in front of the mirrors in K-Mart dressing rooms. No joke. From the sound of him, he's from the deep south, or maybe it's my boyfriend fucking with me long distance. The flashing-through thought of him makes me sad and, after convincing the youth that there's nothing wrong with masturbation and that it's still unproven as to its ability to confirm or deny entrance into heaven, I make plans to greet my boyfriend at the door in the naughtiest lingerie I can find for my discretionary twenty buck. Do people do that anymore? Use surprise as an advantage? Or is everything so expected as to become just . . . ordinary?

Sunday

While one might be the loneliest number, Sunday is the loneliest day for phone sex operators, or "ops" as we like to call ourselves. To my ears, it sounds like some sort of military term, like we're defending our country or protecting our flag or performing some noble service for our motherland. ¶ My first Sunday brings a caller who I refuse to believe is really of the cloth, even though all the girls will later giggle and poke each other and swear that he's a regular. I play along, dousing my white breasts with red communion wine that stains them purple and agreeing to let him call me "Whore of Babylon" while he stuffs my ass with what's underneath his cassock. He likes it when I improvise, stretching my arms out along the cross, licking Jesus' loincloth and promising to engage in any manner of perverted activities with the entire canon of saints. I don't care; I'm not religious. But Carolann is crying when I get off the phone. Her mascara is smeared and she's high again. The black drips down the sides of her nose until she looks like one of those statues that time has indelibly weathered—something old and sad, that's never going to be the same again. Our supervisor grabs her by the armpits and hoists her out of her chair. "No room for junkies at this place of business," she says. "No room for slackers like you. You might live or die," she says, "making an impression or not. But people will always pay for sex." ©



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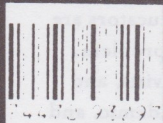
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Drug companies are convincing us we're

in \$ANITY

By Kari Lydersen

To hear some tell it, we're in the midst of a mental illness crisis, the likes of which this country has never before seen. 40 percent of children—almost half—have a condition called "Oppositional Defiant Disorder," according to the National Institute of Mental Health. And 31 percent have AD/HD, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder. *Attention!*, a magazine published by Children and Adults with Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) includes a list to help parents determine whether their daughter has AD/HD. The questions include: "Does she seem to put things off until later? Does she often lose or misplace items? Does she seem over-sensitive or too easily embarrassed?"—who *wouldn't* answer yes? Of the ads on one Chicago subway car this winter, almost half were advertising medical treatment for mental disorders. One offered parents the possibility of free drug treatment for their depressed teens, part of an experimental drug program at the University of Chicago. Another ad, from Northwestern Medical Center's Behavioral Pharmacology Center, asked if you suffer from "extreme shyness," and described how drugs can help you overcome this debilitating disorder.

Many psychiatrists, counselors, and mental health organizations say that there is in fact an epidemic of mental illness among youth, and that AD/HD and other disorders are being diagnosed in increasingly high numbers because doctors and educators are finally understanding the signs and the scope of the problem.

But a growing number of parents, students, activists, and even teachers and politicians are questioning this epidemic, and pointing out the fact that drug companies are making millions on the widespread usage of Ritalin, Prozac, Dexedrine and other psy-

"THEY'RE NOT JUST SELLING DRUGS, BUT INVENTING AND SELLING THE 'ILLNESSES' YOU NEED THEM FOR,



crazy — but some people are fighting back.

choactive drugs. The Support Coalition, an Oregon-based international coalition of self-proclaimed "psychiatry survivors," includes 64 American and 24 international groups. They describe out-of-control drug companies pushing psychiatric drugs to make a profit; legislators, non-profits and doctors out to reap the drug companies' favors; and teachers, law enforcement agents and parents all too eager to see kids obedient and subdued.

"They want to see a lot more people on psychiatric drugs," said David Oaks, one of the founders of the Support Coalition and editor of *Dendron* magazine, during a speech in Chicago this winter. "This push, this chemical crusade, is taking a huge toll on us physically, psychologically, and spiritually."

Oaks was speaking at an organizing meeting for Mad Lib, a local organization started by activist Katherine Hodges last May. Mad Lib held a protest at CHADD's annual meeting in Chicago in November.

"We are concerned about CHADD's zeal in promoting a highly controversial, dubious diagnosis," Hodges wrote in a pamphlet distributed at the event. "There's no proof that AD/HD or any condition labeled mental illness or learning disability is genetic or biochemical. Ample evidence suggests that AD/HD is caused by school and family problems and/or is just a label used to stigmatize the normal behavior of children."

The theme of the CHADD conference was "Diversity, Equity, Empowerment," with a goal of screening more black and Latino youth for AD/HD and medication.

"We're hearing about getting more Ritalin to the underserved African-American students, so they can be as lucky as all the white middle class kids on Ritalin," says Oaks.

David Fassler, a Vermont youth psychiatrist and representative of the American Psychiatric Association, disagrees. He says that many children are in need of medication for attention disorders, and their school work and family lives will be vastly improved by treatment.

"There are a lot of kids with significant behavioral and emotional disorders who really need help," says Fassler. "These disorders have existed for a long time but we're getting better at recognizing the signs at early ages. The symptoms alone don't mean there is a problem, but if they are interfering with a child's life, no matter how common they sound, they should get treatment."

Anti-medicating advocates counter these assertions by saying that not only is medication expensive and unnecessary, it can be extremely harmful—causing permanent physical changes in a child's brain and suppressing their natural personality and development.

SUCH AS PAXIL FOR 'EXTREME SHYNESS.'

—Katherine Hodges

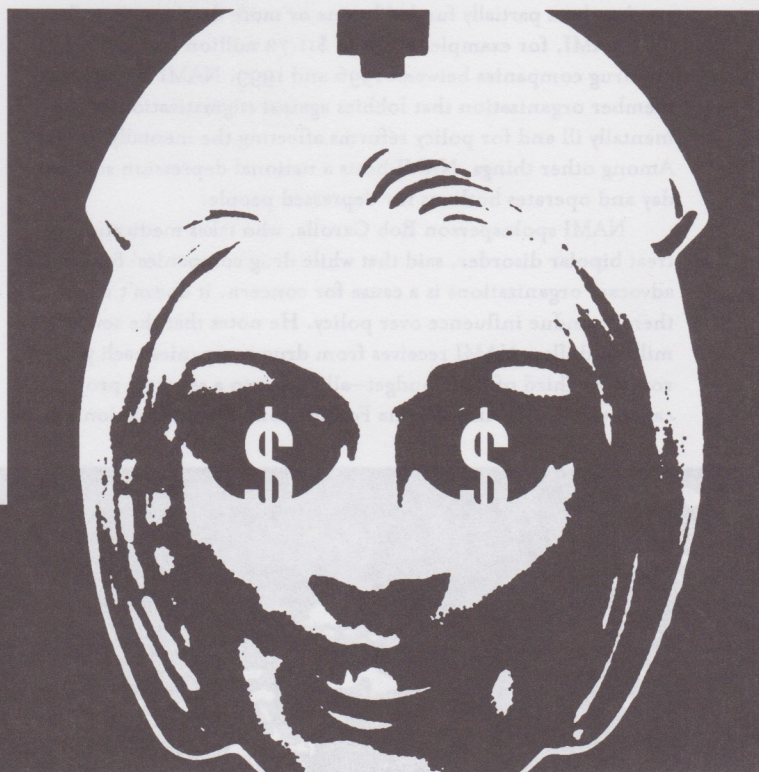
Science is beginning to bear this theory out.

Neuroleptics are a type of psychoactive drug widely used to control schizophrenia, depression, manic-depression and AD/HD. Recent research has showed that these drugs can permanently change the structure of the brain, causing an irreversible disorder called tardive dyskinesia in many users. Also, Neuroleptics are addictive and cause withdrawal symptoms when stopped, and they also interfere with the body's ability to control heat.

At a US House of Representatives meeting last September, medical experts with varying opinions on AD/HD medication testified before the subcommittee of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Committee chair Congressman Peter Hoekstra (R-Michigan) stated that, "There is no professional consensus about the origin and nature of AD/HD . . . and our nation is over-prescribing drugs to treat whatever AD/HD is."

A recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics said an estimated 4-12 percent of youth are affected by AD/HD. The Surgeon General has stated that "children, particularly active boys, are being over-diagnosed with AD/HD and thus are receiving psychostimulants unnecessarily."

While opposition to the over-use of Ritalin and similar behavioral drugs is becoming more and more mainstream, groups like Mad Lib and the Support Coalition that have a very anti-medication stance are still considered fringe groups in the mental health community. Mainstream mental health advocacy groups like the National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as well as CHADD and the American Psychiatric Association tend to be in favor of



FORCED TREATMENT IS RAMPANT IN PRISONS, NURSING HOMES, JUVENILE DETENTION

increased screening for AD/HD, bipolar disorder, depression and the like, as well as medication for these supposed ailments.

Rex Cowdry, medical director for the National Association of the Mentally Ill (NAMI), said that there are many kids who are adversely affected by AD/HD and related disorders who can greatly benefit from treatment.

"A lot of the kids who end up in the juvenile justice system are there because they didn't get the treatment they needed," he said.

However, he said overdiagnosis and overmedication are real concerns.

"You have the extremist groups saying there's a plot to drug all our kids, and then on the other side you have the people in schools who want to push medication on more and more kids, often without adequate evaluation," Cowdry said. "These are both irresponsible positions."

Mad Lib's Hodges thinks that while groups like NAMI are often well-meaning, the funding they receive from drug companies influences their stances.

Her skepticism about medication comes largely from her own experience: prescription drugs she took for depression and panic attacks in the past left her strung out and manic. When she reported these problems, she was given even more medications—sedatives and mood stabilizers. After six months, she was on yet another pill regimen, and feeling scared and confused by the whole process. She felt like doctors weren't really listening to her questions and complaints about the medications, and they were overeager to prescribe medicines for every problem, including the side effects of other medications.

"They're not just selling drugs, but inventing and selling the 'illnesses' you need them for, such as Paxil for 'extreme shyness,'" she said. "Try to find any 'educational' material—brochures at a college health centers, depression awareness campaigns and screening days, publications of the American Psychiatric Association—that aren't at least partially funded by one or more drug company."

NAMI, for example, received \$11.72 million from 18 different drug companies between 1996 and 1999. NAMI is a 21,000-member organization that lobbies against stigmatization of the mentally ill and for policy reforms affecting the mentally ill. Among other things, NAMI hosts a national depression screening day and operates hotlines for depressed people.

NAMI spokesperson Bob Carolla, who takes medication to treat bipolar disorder, said that while drug companies' funding of advocacy organizations is a cause for concern, it doesn't mean there is undue influence over policy. He notes that the several million dollars NAMI receives from drug companies each year—roughly a third of their budget—all goes into a separate project called the NAMI Anti-Stigma Foundation. The foundation works

against discrimination toward the mentally ill and stereotypical images of the mentally ill in the media.

"We openly disclose the fact that we do receive money from the pharmaceutical industry," says Carolla. "But all that money has to go into the Anti-Stigma Foundation, and the money has to come as an unrestricted grant. It's kept separate from NAMI proper. We try to isolate our board from having any direct reliance on or control over that money."

(The Support Coalition's Oaks insists that while separation of NAMI and the Anti-Stigma Foundation may be stated policy, there is really very little distinction between the two organizations, with board and staff members as well as money moving freely between both.)

Carolla notes that organizations like the American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association are in the same boat. While funding from drug companies might not be ideal, he says, he considers it a worthwhile trade-off for the positive work they do.

"Most organizations that are organized around specific illnesses and classes of illnesses are supported by pharmaceutical companies' money and money from health maintenance organizations," he said. "Does that end up influencing decisions or policies? It's a fair question. The fact is there aren't a lot of other companies willing to fund the type of work we do."

But not all the work NAMI does is touchy-feely anti-stigma education and voter drives. They also lobby in favor of "forced treatment," meaning the use of medication and even electroshock therapy on people without their consent. Forced treatment is rampant in prisons, nursing homes, juvenile detention facilities and hospitals, according to Oaks and other mental health advocates. News stories over the past year back them up. For example, a November 16, 2000 article in the *New Times LA* tells the story of 11-year-old Johnny Mack Dixon, who ended up in the children's ward of the Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk after being turned over to the state by his crack-addicted mother. "Given a powerful combination of psychiatric drugs by government doctors," the article says, "Johnny seems like a zombie, his relative say. He often drools, seems sleepy and disoriented much of the time, and urinates on himself at night. In the last four years he has been on at least 15 psychiatric medications, most of which have never been tested on children and some of which are not even approved for psychiatric purposes."

The article quotes Paul Fink, a former president of the APA, speaking out against the use of psychiatric drugs on children.

"Every drug is potentially a poison," said Fink. "These doctors don't know how these drugs will affect these kids."

Dixon's story isn't unique. On Nov. 22, a Long Island judge ordered 25-year-old Adam Szyzsko to undergo electroshock therapy



FACILITIES AND HOSPITALS

at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center, despite Szyzko and his family's statements that he did not want the treatment. A *Newsday* article from July 10 reports that Pilgrim is under investigation for the deaths of three patients and the paralysis of a fourth over Easter weekend.

"After the hearing I felt so helpless because it seemed like everything was stacked against us," Adam's sister Anna is quoted as saying on the Support Coalition Web site. "This is unbelievable."

Forced treatment extends not only to people confined in institutions, but to a large number of people court-ordered to take medication in their own homes.

NAMI is among the many groups who advocate for increased Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC) laws, state laws that allow the coerced medical treatment of people who are diagnosed with psychiatric problems. (Hodges points out that another big IOC advocate, the Treatment Advocacy Center run by E. Fuller Torrey, has close ties to Ralph Nader's Public Citizen group, including a joint Web site. She said Nader was evasive about the issue when questioned during his presidential campaign.)

New York's IOC law is called "Kendra's Law" in reference to a woman who was pushed in front of a subway by a mentally ill man. But the reference is erroneous, Oaks points out, since the indigent man who committed the crime had sought psychiatric treatment on numerous occasions and been turned down by healthcare providers.

Hodges and Oaks say it is common practice for NAMI, the media and other groups to sensationalize isolated incidents in which mentally ill people commit crimes in order to push for increased involuntary treatment. As outlined on their Web site, NAMI has a campaign calling for more liberal IOC laws, allowing the state to easily order people to be treated.

"Current interpretations of laws that require proof of dangerousness often produce unsatisfactory outcomes because individuals are allowed to deteriorate needlessly before involuntary commitment and/or court-ordered treatment can be instituted," a NAMI report says. "When the dangerousness standard is used, it must be interpreted more broadly than 'imminently' or 'provably' dangerous."

"This all adds up to being preventative detention," says Hodges. "We make analogies to the detention of Japanese-Americans during World War II."

In the US, 37 states and the District of Columbia have laws which allow court orders to force people to take medication, even while living in their own homes. Often, these court orders are alternatives to incarceration after someone has been arrested.



In October, Congress passed a bill allocating up to \$10 million a year for mental health court programs allowing treatment instead of incarceration for mentally ill people who commit nonviolent crimes. It is estimated that about 16 percent of jail and prison inmates in the US are suffering from mental illness. The alternative sentencing should be seen as a positive development for nonviolent

offenders who will likely be far better off at home than in prison. But the Support Coalition's Oaks still finds the concept of forced medication deeply troubling.

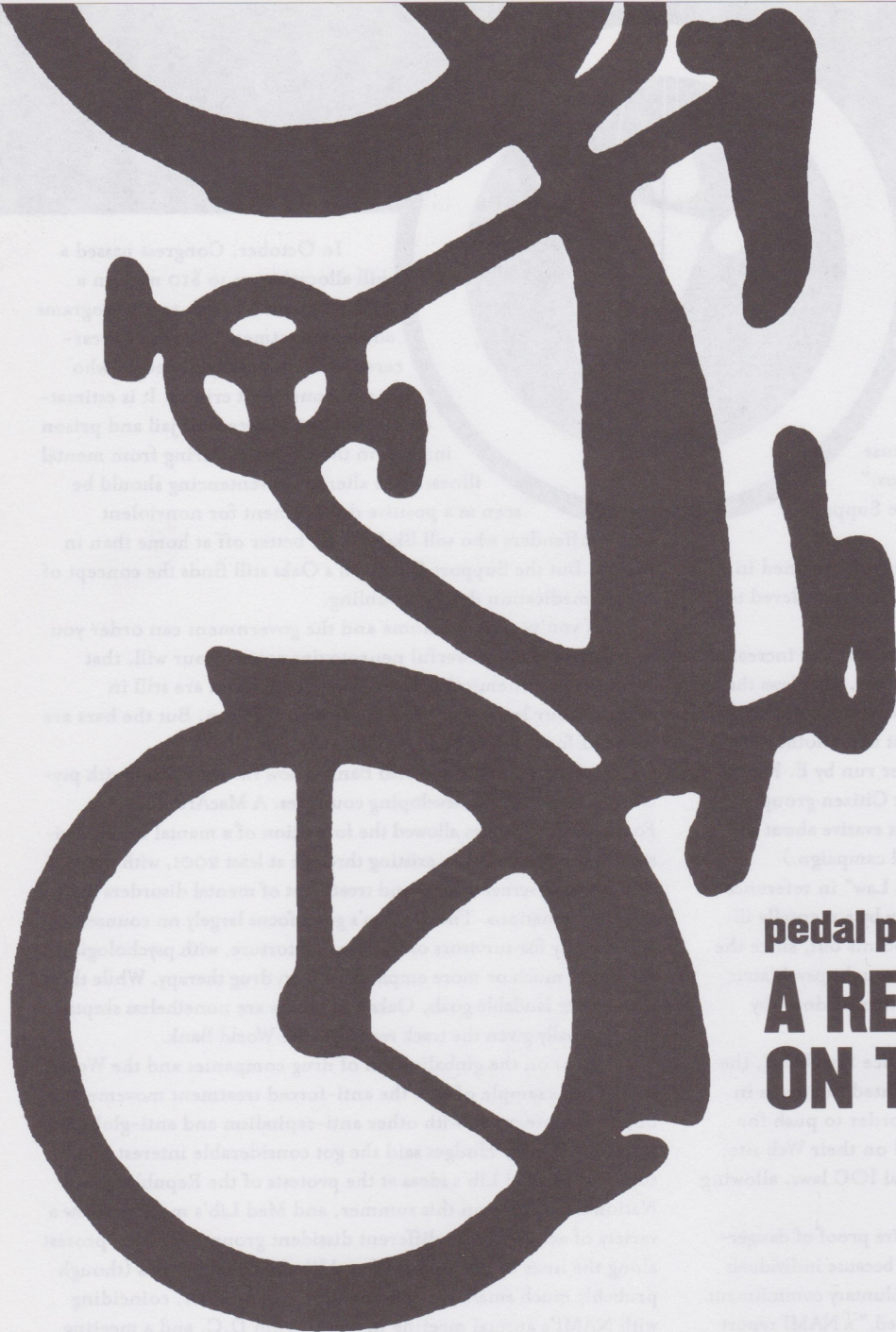
"If you're living at home and the government can order you to take extremely powerful neurotoxins against your will, that amounts to a chemical prison," says Oaks. "You are still in prison. Your home has been made into a prison. But the bars are made of forced pills or injections."

Oaks notes that the World Bank is now involving itself with psychiatric treatment in developing countries. A MacArthur Foundation grant has allowed the formation of a mental health division of the World Bank, existing through at least 2001, with the goal of increasing screening for and treatment of mental disorders in developing nations. The division's goals focus largely on counseling and therapy for survivors of warfare and torture, with psychological therapy as much or more emphasized than drug therapy. While these sounds like laudable goals, Oaks and others are nonetheless skeptical, especially given the track record of the World Bank.

Focus on the globalization of drug companies and the World Bank is an example of how the anti-forced treatment movement is becoming integrated with other anti-capitalism and anti-globalization movements. Hodges said she got considerable interest and support for Mad Lib's ideas at the protests of the Republican National Convention this summer, and Mad Lib's meeting drew a variety of activists from different dissident groups. A major protest along the lines of the anti-IMF and World Bank protests (though probably much smaller) is planned for July of 2001, coinciding with NAMI's annual meeting in Washington D.C. and a meeting of the World Assembly of Mental Health/ World Federation of Mental Health in Vancouver. There are groups similar to the Support Coalition throughout Europe, and July 14, Bastille Day, has been celebrated as a holiday for the movement since the 1980s.

"It's time for our rights to be on the agenda of social change," says Hodges. "The medical model of emotional pain keeps people afraid to go to each other for support, afraid to be too 'different,' afraid to change the world for fear of being called crazy. Psychiatric oppression affects everyone's freedom." ©





pedal power: A REVOLUTION ON TWO WHEELS

by Jen Kaminsky

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we're riding in the streets," shouted James, pounding his fist into the air. All eight of us screamed and took off after him as he raced down the street back to Allston. Revved up from the rock show, we rode in a loose pack, owning the late-night streets as sleeping drivers kept their cars at home. "Bike posses are rad, rad," said Kim as she pulled up next to me. Joel gave me a hi-five as he rode by on the other side, sitting straight up, his hands off the handlebars. In that moment, it was perfect—my friends riding bikes, the warm fall night, the music still beating in my head, the empty streets, and the city that was ours.

Some days in Boston, it seems that all the kids ride bikes and everywhere I go a gang of cyclists follows. Those are the days I love this city, when my bike feels like an extension of its streets and buildings and all of its people seem part of a grand urban community.

My mother taught me how to ride a bike the summer when I was five, on the dead end road by the house she had rented in Sag Harbor. The first bike I remember owning was pink and had a banana seat. My next bike was a bright red 10-speed that my mother bought for me when I was 10. The bike allowed me to keep up with her on the rolling hills of the Central Park bike

That summer, it seemed that all of New York was filled with kids on bikes, roller skates, skateboards, and scooters. As I rode through Midtown traffic or down the small streets downtown, I felt a connection to all of them, as if we had all discovered our wheels at the same time and were out to show them to the world.

path, and it carried me during the various bike trips I took while at summer camp in Vermont. I grew out of that one too by the time I was 15 and upgraded to a touring bike that I used on trips in Maine and Nova Scotia. Once I was too old for summer camp or organized trips, however, I stopped biking, and my bikes were hand-me-downs for younger relatives or stored in the basement.

I began biking again the summer after my sophomore year of college in New York City. I was living at home and attempting to save money. Subway fares had just gone up to \$1.50, and it occurred to me that biking would be a cheaper mode of transportation. I had seen kids on old low-rider bikes with long handle bars and banana seats and vintage beach cruisers with fenders, pedal brakes, and rounded frames resembling the old cars from the '50s. I envisioned myself riding a similar one, in a perfect union of form and function. I spent a week scouring every junk store and flea market I passed to find the perfect bike that would look cool and get me to work on time. I discovered my beautiful turquoise and white Columbia cruiser at a small bike stand in an indoor market on the Lower East Side, surrounded by crates of produce and butcher's counters. And there began my reintroduction to the bike—not as a form of recreation as when I was younger, but as a utilitarian vehicle that would be my primary mode of transportation.


The cruiser was heavy and slow, but I loved it. I rode everywhere—to work, to meet my friends, and to explore parts of the city where I rarely walked or took the train. That summer, it seemed that all of New York was filled with kids on bikes, roller skates, skateboards, and scooters. As I rode through Midtown traffic or down the small streets downtown, I felt a connection to all of them, as if we had all discovered our wheels at the same time and were out to show them to the world. For me, the bike granted the agency of the car—getting anywhere at anytime—without the complications of parking, rising gas prices, or exhaust fumes. Now, almost four years later, the bike plays an ever-increasing number of roles in my life by providing a means for transportation, social life, and activism.

Within my circles of friends and the wider population of the Greater Boston area, where I now live, the cycling ranks continue to swell as more and more people begin to recognize the functionality and fun of biking. The local cycling-activist group Bikes not Bombs (BNB) holds an annual race, the Commuter Challenge, where three groups—one on bike, one riding the Orange Line, and one driving—set off for the three-and-a-half mile trip from BNB's shop in Roxbury to Downtown Crossing. Some years the bikers win, other years, those on the train arrive at the destination first, but, every year the drivers arrive last. BNB

uses the race to demonstrate to the kids enrolled in their mechanics and safety program that in a small city like Boston, where traffic is fierce, parking is scarce, and the public transportation system does not adequately serve many neighborhoods or provide a convenient schedule, biking provides a more logical solution for getting around.

However, while biking may be sensible and enjoyable, it carries a variety of risks due to reckless drivers and a public policy that favors the needs of drivers over those of cyclists and pedestrians. Automobile accidents claim more American lives each year than any of the major diseases that we spend billions of dollars researching and attempting to prevent, but politicians and civil engineers continue to rely on traffic designs where the unobstructed flow of traffic—not the safety of pedestrians and cyclists—remains the paramount concern. Throughout all my years of cycling, I've been lucky to never have been involved in a car accident, but each time I ride, I always harbor the fear that this trip might be the one to end my good fortune. Sometimes, listening to the cars driving by me and smelling the acrid smoke from their exhaust, I can almost feel the impact. One day, I'll hear brakes screeching, then feel the dizzying nausea and resounding tones of my head hitting the pavement as the bike slides out from under me, my feet still caught in the toe clamps. According to the laws of probability, it seems that I should expect that crash relatively soon. You can follow all the safety and traffic rules and take precautions—helmet, reflectors, flashing safety lights, armor—and the efforts might still not be enough. But every day when I get ready to leave the house, I realize that I can stand the fear and the dangers, and I will continue to choose to bike.

In a broader sense, the fear of being hit by the car is symbolic of the fear of a car-centered society. Particular powers—both government and corporate—have worked to create our car culture and to maintain it, either through failing to build adequate public transportation networks or cycling facilities, or choosing planning and architecture—such as strip malls and superhighways—that do not facilitate pedestrian activity or close-knit neighborhoods. In addition, the car industry creates a narrative that constructs its product as an essential piece of the modern drive for the freedom of the American frontier and the status of the American dream, while requiring us to drive for the smallest of errands or work extra hours to afford payments on the newest models. While John Wayne needed only a gun and a good horse, these new cowboys need three tons of steel and four-wheel drive. With names like "Escape" and "Intrepid," as well as ever-present ads on television and magazines of SUVs careening over serene mountain paths or slick sedans cruising down empty highways, car culture bombards us wherever we turn.



It is this dream of the livable city that holds the fear at bay, keeps me on my bike, and provokes the questions that push me to make the dream come true.

Making our communities more equitable and inclusive requires a re-thinking of our car addiction. Cars will always have their place, but it is time for other modes to be given a larger share of our country's vast resources. Only then will we be able to make the streets truly safe for *all* users—bikers, pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers. It is this ideal of an improved quality of life in our cities and a sustainable future without traffic jams, road rage, sprawl, disintegration of community, environmental destruction, and all the other consequences of our dependence on internal combustion, that underlies cyclists demands for bike lanes on major streets and safer crossings at high-traffic intersections. It is this dream of the livable city that holds the fear at bay, keeps me on my bike, and provokes the questions that push me to make the dream come true.

Both cyclists and pedestrians feel most safe on the small streets where traffic tends to be slow and people can easily cross from one side to another. And it is also on those streets where I find the most vibrant urban life. Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a classic work on urban planning, defines public space as a city's streets and sidewalks, and calls these thoroughfares a city's "most vital organs." She contends that the safety and interest that one finds in those spaces determine the safety and interest of a city. The celebrated cities are those where pedestrians fill the streets, participating in a grand pageant, coming and going from homes, stores, offices, and entertainment. Revolutions—both intellectual and political—are synonymous with dense urban neighborhoods from New York City's Greenwich Village to Paris' Left Bank to Beijing's Tienanmen Square. We come together in the streets, both as a community and as strangers, and it is there where one finds that diversity and particular quality that in some intangible way defines urbanism.

On the other hand, those wide arterial roads that cut through communities and are filled with lanes of speeding traffic attract fewer pedestrians, fewer bikes, and fewer uses beyond being a fast way to exit a dying city. Whereas cars bring large roads and strings of strip malls that impose a blandness and uniformity on the landscape, biking is transportation on a human scale, in harmony with the environment, not dominant over it. Open and exposed, cyclists interact with the neighborhoods they pass in a way that is not possible for the hermetically sealed motorist, separated from the street by a steel cage, climate control, and a soundtrack different from the rhythms of the life they pass by.

In my daily travels I watch all of the road's users and I ask: Whose streets are these anyway? I answer myself: These are our streets, and it's time to take them back. Bikers, walkers, transit riders, children, and neighborhood residents are starting to come together to reclaim these rights of way that belong to us, just as much as they do to the cars. For many, the fear of the accidents keeps them out of the streets, but for others that anxiety has been transformed into an anger that has led to action. In San Francisco, a group of pedestrian activists draws chalk outlines at the sites of what have become routine traffic fatalities. Another

group chose to honor the 100th anniversary of the first such death in 1899, when a man stepped off a New York City streetcar into the path of a speeding motorist.

On September 21, 2000, cycling groups here in Boston organized an inaugural Car-Free Day demonstration, done in conjunction with actions in many European cities, as well as those in other parts of the world. The efforts nominally focused on the infamous Route 9 Crossing that divides the heavily used Emerald Necklace bike path. At that point, cyclists, joggers, and pedestrians have to cross six lanes of traffic with no sign of a crosswalk or stoplight anywhere in sight. On Car-Free Day, the crossing functioned as a rallying point to facilitate a dialogue about the role of the car in our society.

Over 300 people came to the Car-Free demonstration, and the event was bigger, more positive, and more festive than any who had participated in its organization had imagined. Bikers formed a moving picket, walking their bikes through the crossing for over two hours. Rush hour traffic came to a halt. All around riders and pedestrians, parents and children, young and old filled the space. Here was *my* community, appropriating this public space for our own designs.

After a few rounds through the crossing, I stopped to watch the event with my friends Lena and Kim who held a giant banner painted with the international car-free logo. Ivanna passed, wielding a stamper taken from the Cape Cod ferry and covering us with black ink bicycles. In the street, kids on BMX bikes pulled wheelies over the street's median strip; costumed cyclists rode homemade bikes with long handlebars and giant frames; hipster messengers posed on stylish track bikes; couples shared tandem bikes; and spandex-clad racers whizzed by on stream-lined road bikes. Pedestrians carrying giant puppets walked through the crowds and helped direct traffic. Members of Food not Bombs served a free meal to any who were hungry. As the sun began to set, we rode a final round, and gathering on top of the Jamaica Way Bridge over the crossing we let out a triumphant yell to celebrate at what had been done. In this ride, fear had been replaced with excitement and spontaneity, camaraderie and cooperation, and a sense of the possibilities our collective energy could have.

If one of the drivers, stopped in the traffic we created, began to envy the freedom of the bikers ahead or noticed the green line trolleys at Brookline Village or rumbling down South Huntington Avenue, then the demonstration was a success. Maybe those drivers will recognize the life choices that brought them to that traffic jam and the viability of alternative modes of transportation. If one driver can start that process, then soon it will be 50 or 100 or 1000, and then our televisions will be saturated with ads for bikes, our communities will be filled with pedestrians and playing children, our cities will be vibrant and exciting, our politicians will choose to spend their highway funds on bike paths and rail lines carrying people throughout the city and rest of the country, and *every* day will be car free. ©

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february

- 21 Austin, TX
- 22 Houston, TX
- 25 Sunrise, FL
- 26 Tampa, FL
- 27 Athens, GA

march

- 01 Chapel Hill, NC
- 02 Washington, DC
- 03 Philadelphia, PA
- 04 Lowell, MA
- 05 NYC, NY
- 06 Albany, NY
- 07 Detroit, MI
- 09 Chicago, IL
- 10 Milwaukee, WI
- 11 Columbia, MO
- 12 Kansas City, KS
- 14 Denver, CO
- 16 West Hollywood, CA
- 17 San Francisco, CA
- 18 La Jolla, CA

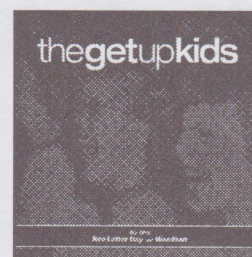
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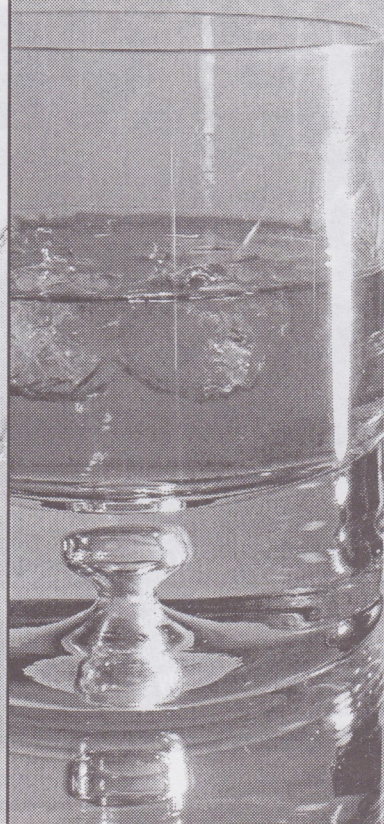


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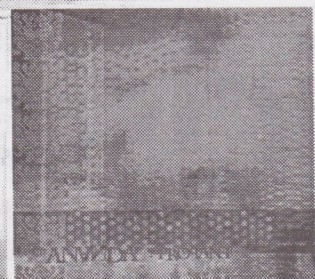
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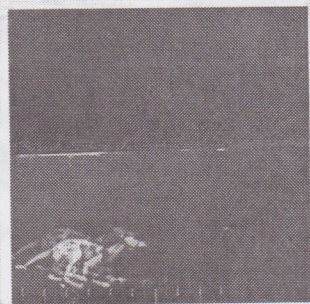
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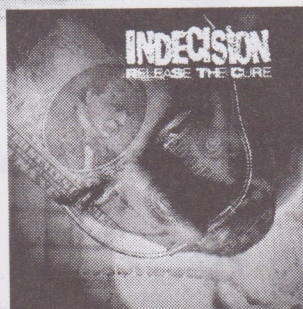


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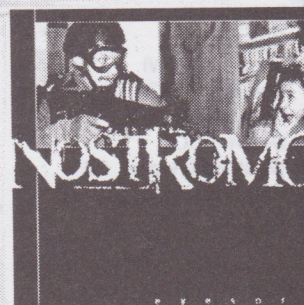
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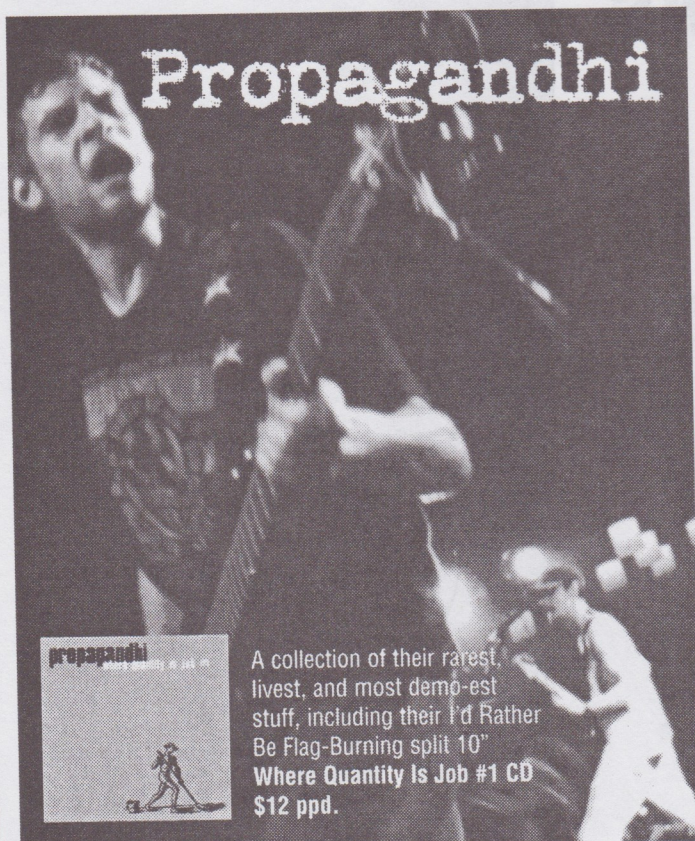
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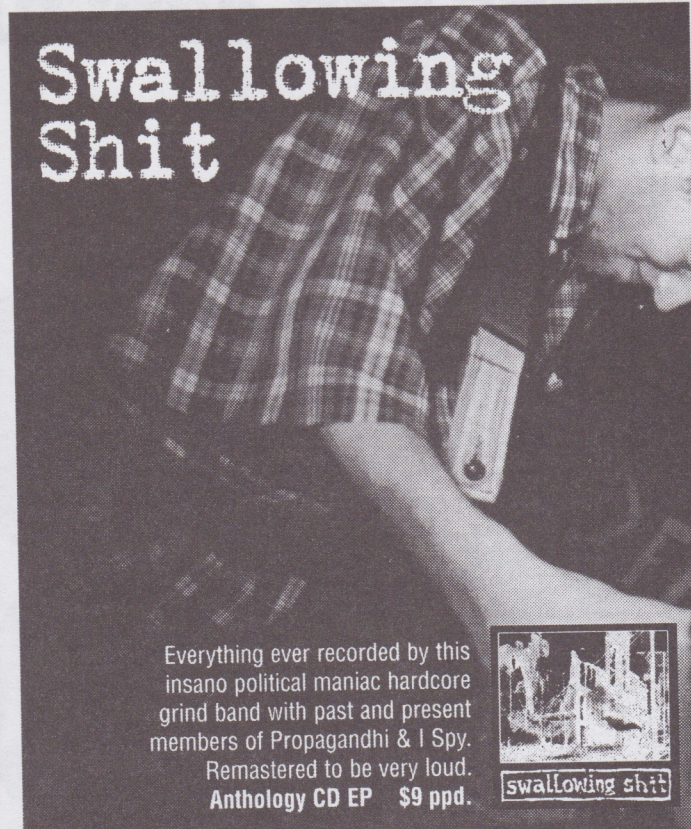
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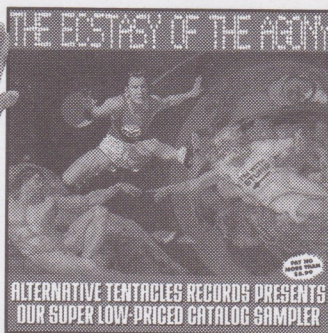
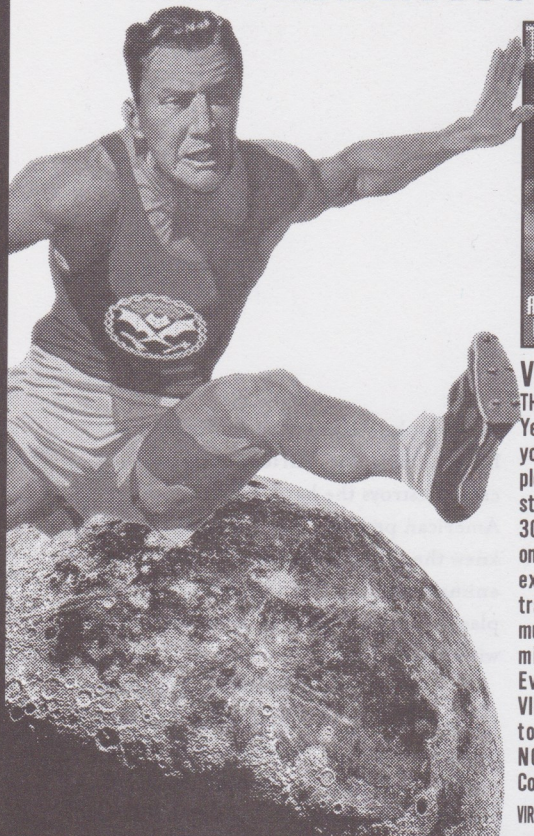
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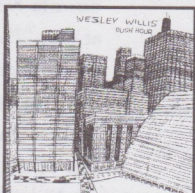


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Ghost Bitch part 2

by John Mancuso

Continued from last issue . . .

In less than a minute, the guy has Ghost Bitch at gun point, dragging him back to his truck. I start running. The guy shoots. It's in the air, but the noise makes me fall to the ground.

The guy runs up to me, "Come here, you little fuck." He grabs me and Leash by the arm and throws me against the car. Ghost Bitch whimpers.

He says, "You think I like chasin' fags at night? Well, I don't!" He tells us Ghost Bitch owes him \$300, and makes us empty our pockets. "You all are gonna pay. Specially you." He winks at me.

Then he forces us to wait in the car while he inspects the scarecrow. When he makes us get back out, he pulls on Leash's dog collar, "Is that what you are, a little dog? Huh? Answer me!" She cries.

Looking at me, he says, "I know who you are. Whatta coinkidinke. Your picture been on TV 'nuff times to recollect that face. Your daddy was the Tar Mill Killer. Wasn't he? Killed them poor little job stealin' porch monkeys from here

downta North Carolina." He aims his gun at me, "He was a tough bastard. It's a damn shame he got caught."

He pulls on Leash's collar again, "You didn't know this guy was the bastard son of the Tar Mill Killer, did you? He might grow up just like his daddy and kill you, too." She nods yes. Of course I know she knows. Everybody does. It's just something we've never talked about.

He touches my cheek, "Ghost Bitch was right, you do have your father's pretty face."

The guy never points his gun away from us. All of a sudden, Ghost Bitch starts bawling hysterically behind him. This is friggin' unbelievable: this redneck trick or connection, whoever he is, with his dirty white tank top and a gun, next to Boy George with runny makeup. I look at Leash and we just start cracking up. But then he hits the back of my head with his gun and barks orders for us to start loading the scarecrow into his truck.

He rambles on about my father, filling his fat mouth with chew, going on and

on about how we need more "boys" like him and how this "African-American crap" destroys the hard work of good, American people. "He was a real man who knew the difference between humans and animals. And he kept the animals in their place." I'm too scared to make eye contact with Leash again.

Then, the dumbassed fuckhead throws me up to the truck, "Ready to go do whatever daddy taughtya. Huh? I know he musta taught you good. I know, boy, 'cause you look just like him. You don't look like no whimpering sorry ass excuse of a woman like that mess over there." Ghost Bitch's face looks as swollen as a fetal pig's, and his makeup has dripped to one thick border of black sludge between the collar of his body suit and his sweaty neck. I have no idea what this idiot's raving about. I just want this whole charade to end.

In a flash, I realize the guy kisses me on the lips. His sour, rotten egg spit coats my mouth. It's all I can smell when I breathe. I wipe and wipe and wipe, trying to get his shit off me.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: I am thrilled by the number of submissions I have received over these past few months...keep 'em comin'. Keep them around 1600 words, submit electronically where possible (MS Word makes me happy, otherwise plain text format). And one last thing: please put your name and contact information on the submission itself, as well as in the attached email. I will try to give everyone some kind of feedback, but be patient with me. Reading and responding to all of this work takes a lot of time. Also, if you have any responses to the fiction we're run so far, please share them: fiction@punkplanet.com.

I have another call for submissions to bring to your attention...this one is more specific. I am editing a book on the service industry for Garrett County Press. Garrett County is the small, independent press who brought us *The Best Of Temp Slave*. Check out their website: www.gcpress.com. My book, *For Here or To Go*, aims to be a hard-hitting but fun collection of stories, essays, comics, and poetry. The guidelines are fairly strict, so listen carefully: the pieces *really* need to be about service work. This does not include office temping or other white-collar work. I'm looking for pieces on restaurant work, domestic work, sex work, etc. If you have something you think would be appropriate, please send it to me. Also, if you have an idea (i.e., an interview with a career waitress who has worked at the same diner for 20 years) feel free to pitch it. And fiction is encouraged, so long as it's pretty well grounded in your experience (idealized fantasies about the working class will find no home here). If you have questions, ask away. Send submissions to elfez9@earthlink.net. —Leah Ryan

He puts me, Leash, and the scarecrow into the bed of his truck.

"I used to write to your daddy in jail ya know. He's been my hero ever since I seen his face when he was just a suspect for murderin' that ape over in Parsons."

He kisses me again. "Your little fag-got friend told me you was a doll." Little scraps of soggy tobacco float onto my tongue. Thank God he gets in the truck and starts driving.

Even in the wind I can still smell the rank stench of his rotten cheese. I spit on my lips trying to wash it off. Now my hands smell. Goat's gizzards. Stale blood. Cat piss. Fucking gross. When I curl my upper lip and take a whiff, I taste it; I dry heave and then throw up all over myself.

We drive in and out of darkness and the lights of small towns. Leash and I lie in the bed. The wind becomes painful, freezing. We drive for what seems like an hour and a half. I know exactly what he's doing in the back of my mind, but I know his plan cannot work; he's too dense. He knows the town, but he would never know exactly where they live, nobody does. I remember that it was to be kept a secret.

They said the town was shocked and outraged. Thousands cheered outside of the courthouse the night the death penalty verdict was read. Newsspeak. Headlines in all of the papers. Old school photos of him that I'd never seen. Blips on the radio between my favorite songs. National news. Local news. Gossip. Prayer services. Town meetings. Press conferences. Briefings. Debriefings. Are you worried the other kids will treat you differently? How does it feel to know your father will be put to death, Lex? Will you miss him?

We get to Parsons. He makes a couple of lefts and rights . . . shit, he knows.

He knows. We finally stop. He takes a can of gasoline and pours it all over the pumpkin head. He carries it, making us carry the rest of the scarecrow to somebody's lawn. And then ties me and Leash with rope and jumper cables to their mailbox. It cannot really be the Hammonds—I've never been to their house, never seen it either—but they've moved, they must have. He's just trying to scare me into thinking it's them.

The guy throws a match on the pumpkin head. It explodes in a fiery halo of orange. He and Ghost Bitch get in the truck; Leash starts screaming for help.

Lights go on in the house. The little boy, who was just a baby when it all happened, looks out the window. Even though this will get straightened out and he'll know I didn't do this, he's still being stared at, jolted out of bed for another reminder.

As they drive off, the guy wails "niggers" three times. His words bring back all of the specters of my father's execution, rows of whispering phantoms pointing fingers at me. My friends and their parents hugging each other in their church outfits. And the cameras, the swarming little demons that let all of the Fat Enemas and Peg Legs in the world see everything about me while they ate potato chips on their couches. They sat there, shoving their faces, listening to the stopwatch measure the father's last words in a yellow cinder-blocked room. They saw my mother and me drive away after he died, with the empty Hardee's cups and fishing poles from his last camping trip. Cameras followed me everywhere, from beating off in the

shower over to our old house and on to the new one where we were supposed to start again. They saw me come home to the frozen pot pies, dripping all over the oven, while my mother barricaded herself in her room with new boyfriends. They knew I was left handed, dyslexic, a thumb sucker, and about the dirty underwear and socks that kids without fathers wear.

The fire blazes. Sirens rev in the distance, help will be here soon. I see those little kid eyes and I want to scream to the boy and tell him that I know; I swear I know what he feels. I watch Leash cry and then my tears start to travel up my body, ooze out of my eyes and drip from my face. And as the flashing lights come closer and closer, I know the fire will slowly subside. ©

Currently, John Mancuso is in the process of trying to publish his first novel, Harmony Slopes, in which "Ghost Bitch" is a chapter. Another chapter of the manuscript, entitled "Corroded Crown," appeared in the Summer 1999 issue of Fourteen Hills. Additionally, he has received a fellowship from the Vermont Studio Center and has served on staff of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference for three summers. His play, Reporting to Vicky, received an "Outstanding Play" award from Shout Productions, a company whose work showcases at New York's La Mamma, E.T.C.. He is an Instructor of Literature and Composition at the Art Institute of Philadelphia. When writing this story, he pictures a spiraling montage of nostalgia for his only living to rupture the lethargy of 1980 and 1981—when he purchased orange hunting gear at K-Mart to wear with boots and purple heart sunglasses—long before punk was indelibly commodified. John welcomes comments at sonicbloat@mindspring.com

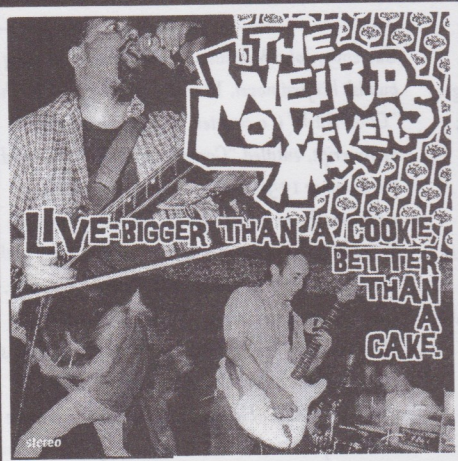
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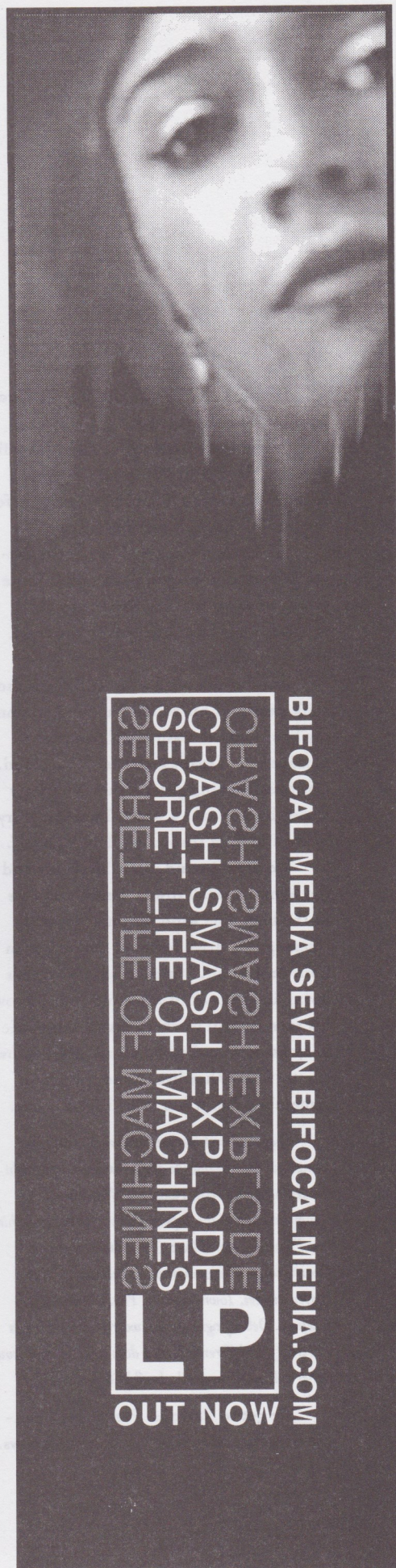
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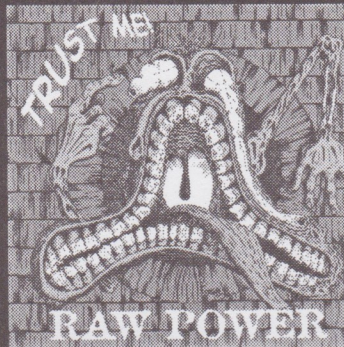


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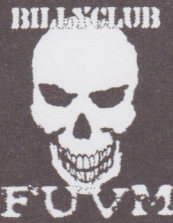
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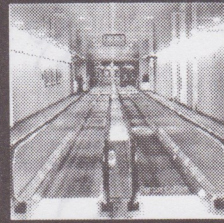
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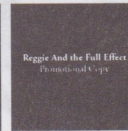
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the DIY files

Crouching Tiger, Stretching Canvas

By Kathy Gilbert

If most artists are struggling, why are art supply stores so astronomically expensive? This disparity has always seemed like injustice incarnate to me. I wonder if art store owners sit behind two-way mirrors laughing at the sight of poor painters digging lint out of their pockets at the register. Well, there are ways to circumvent the system.

One great way to save bucks is to order in bulk from a catalog or online store. I like to order supplies from a company called Utrecht—you can find them on the web at www.utrechtart.com.

Another great way to beat the bank is to make and prepare your own canvases. It's so simple, you could probably figure it out on your own after a few experiments, but hey, why don't I just make it exceedingly easy for you.

Why You Want To Do This

We already discussed the financial advantage, so let's talk about the creative advantage. Have you ever seen a really fabulous looking canvas that's perhaps thicker than the norm or an unusual shape that compliments the composition such that you can't imagine that painting on a standard, store-bought canvas? If so, you know what I'm talking about. I like using thick wood so the final product jumps off the wall. A big mental bonus is that there is less pressure to make the "perfect" painting when you make your own canvases, and thereby you are freer to actually realize this possibility. There are other important reasons to make your own canvases including control over your materials, but I'll leave you to imagine how this process can serve as inspiration before the paint hits the canvas.

What You Need

You don't need much! Buy the canvas, stretcher bars and gesso from a catalog like Utrecht and the rest of your supplies from your local hardware store. You'll need stretcher bars (you can buy these pre-made or make them yourself), a staple gun (I suggest the Arrow ET-50), raw canvas (cotton or linen), acrylic gesso, sandpaper and a clean, flat working surface to set up shop on.

Assemble Your Frame

A frame is four pieces of wood. So, anyway you can make this happen is just fine. You can buy stretcher bars online at a very reasonable price. Stretcher bars come with mitered ends so they fit snugly together. You can also visit your local lumberyard for 1x2s or 2x4s. If you're going the lumber route, first cut the wood to the desired length, then saw the ends at a 45 degree angle. You can assemble the frame by stapling the pieces together using heavy duty staples and wood glue.

Once you've assembled your frame, be sure that it is square. You can do this by measuring across the frame diagonally in both directions. These measurements need to be identical. Believe me, you will be miserable trying to hang or frame a painting that is not square. One more thing, if your frame is longer than 36 inches across, you will need a bit more structural stability. Add braces (a

scrap piece of wood that is stapled to the inside of the frame forming a triangle) to the inside corners of your frame.

Stretch Your Canvas

If you're going to spend money on *anything*, spend it on good quality canvas. It is a good idea to know which canvas material you prefer to work with before you buy a zillion yards of it. I suggest making a covert trip to the art supply store to become familiar with the look and feel of your options. Of course, once you know what you like, buy it in bulk. Roll out your canvas on a clean, flat surface. Lay your frame on top of the canvas. Cut enough canvas to go around your stretcher bars to the back of the frame. This is usually two or three inches more than the frame. You are now ready to stretch your canvas.

Pull the canvas over one of the shorter stretcher bars (unless your canvas is a perfect square, in which case it doesn't matter where you start). Drive a staple through the canvas into the center of the stretcher bar (on the back of your frame, obviously). Now do the same on the remaining three sides. You should have four staples in the middle of your four stretcher bars. Keep a medium tension on the canvas as you work your way around the frame. Continue stapling the canvas to the stretcher bars, moving from the inside of the bars towards the corners. Keep going until you get to within an inch of the corners. It's *very* important that the canvas is stretched evenly and smoothly so spend your time here. It's worth removing staples and repositioning the canvas if you have to. To finish stretching your canvas, fold the corners of the canvas down in a similar manner to making a "hospital corner" on a bedsheet. Make it pretty—there's a certain pride that goes along with making kick-ass corners.

Prepare The Surface

There are several options for surface preparation. I like using acrylic gesso because it is a good base for either acrylic or oil paints. Apply the gesso with a large brush, using random, even strokes. Gesso dries quickly, so move fast. You don't want any strong brush strokes showing, so make sure to keep a keen eye out for any obvious bumps or lumps. The gesso will actually shrink the canvas as it dries, further tightening your work area. After your first gesso application has dried, you can use a light sandpaper to smooth the surface (especially important if you're using heavier canvases, which may have loose threads). Apply another layer of gesso, let dry and sand again, if desired.

Paint

That's it. There's nothing left to do but get crazy creative with your painting. I hope you'll do what I do and have frame-making weekends—make six at a time! I love making frames—almost more than painting! I've been known to bring prepared canvases to classes just to show off my canvas corners. If you need further inspiration, Aristotle once said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit." ©

punk 101

Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?

by James Squeaky



Everyone in the punk scene loves one-inch buttons. They're small, they're easy to take on and off your stuff, and they're very cheap to have made. Currently, there are about 10 punk businesses that specialize in these little critters. I decided to talk to two of them.

Christen Carter has been making buttons under the name Busy Beaver for about five years. Ever since she went to London to hang out with a friend who made them and realized, "Nobody's really doing these for the kids in the states anymore." Wanting to get a button-making business started, Christen purchased a button machine and started writing to labels asking for business. It didn't take long before she found herself overwhelmed. Today, Christen manages to make a living from Busy Beaver with the magical machine that she saved up for four years to buy for a whopping \$7000.

Steve Hincley has been making buttons for about four years. He takes a bit less of a "professional" approach with SChUeLL Inc. Whereas many other button businesses offer other services like rubber stamps, Steve exclusively makes one-inch buttons and does it for dirt cheap. He does it all on a machine that cost around \$500.

Having never made buttons myself, I was very curious about the actual process of putting them together. Christen has put some research into it and claims that very little has changed in the process over the 100 or so years that they've been being made. "There are five parts (clear cover, art, shell, the ring around the back (called the collet) and pin. Each has to be hand-placed, so by today's standards, it's pretty involved. Each button gets touched about 4 times during production." Both claim it to be fairly time consuming and with the production equipment that they are currently using, Christen can make about 400 buttons per hour and Steve around 80.

Both Steve and Christen bought their first button maker with the intention of starting a business, but neither realized what an overwhelming response they would get when they began advertising. "Eventually I took out an ad in *Punk Planet*, and the response I got was tremendous," Steve says. "I literally not only

paid for the ad and the machine, but my parts cost as well . . . I probably got about 20 orders off of one single ad in one magazine."

As far as living off of the revenue from the business, Christen is proud to say that it is her full-time job at this point. Her business is large enough that she has to carefully do the bookkeeping and pay Uncle Sam. Steve currently works two day jobs to pay his bills and enjoys the fact that the business basically supports itself. He hopes to see SChUeLL Inc. turn into his full time job at some point in the future and looks most forward to being his own boss.

Both Christen and Steve see expansion in their future. Christen has plans to make her own line of buttons soon. Steve has started using his button business as a clearing-house to find bands for his record label, Murk Ta, which is also not-for-profit. For both Christen and Steve, the button business looks bright. Here's more:

What do you like about making buttons and running your business?

Steve: They just have this amazing appeal to me. You can put them on your jacket and let people know how cool you are by advertising 50 bands you like rather than wearing just one lousy T-shirt. ¶ The thing that I like most about running SChUeLL Inc. is helping somebody get their name or product out. Most of my customers are really small independent artists/bands/labels, or just average joes . . . the people I associate the most with. Most of the bands will throw in a demo of their music in with their order, and it is great to hear some of the grassroots stuff going on in music. It's not strictly punk either, there is a lot of cool shit going on, and I love being privy to it!

Christen: I've liked different things through the duration I've been doing this. At first, I was just so excited about buttons and the production aspect of it. Then, I got sick of the production because it was taking up my whole life and my body ached. I started to develop a love/hate relationship with the button company. Then I got friends to help out part-time and since then, I like the people I deal with the best and also looking at the art. I love the people who work here.

What do you think the role competition plays in the decisions you make as a businessperson? What is the importance of competition in the punk rock scene and why compete at all?

Christen: I used to feel competitive about it, but not much anymore. The first button company that popped up with the same prices as Busy Beaver bummed me out, but now there are just so many. And they've come and gone. I came to the conclusion that there is room for us all. I'm happy with what I do. I guess competition is supposed to be good for the customer; I think it probably is—it's made me work harder.

Steve: As with all businesses, competition is healthy. I have even sent people to Busy Beaver before, when people needed them sooner than I could provide. Competition is a necessary evil.

Otherwise, a monopoly develops and that's no good. As far as the decisions I make, yes it does influence me a bit. Since the others offer other services, I try to keep my prices as low—or lower—as them. I do make a bit of profit from the initial order, but it goes right back into the business to re-order supplies and pay for ads.

Define "DIY" and "independent."

Christen: Well, being "independent" doesn't inherently mean "good." I would even guess that most independent companies are evil. This being said, I still feel better about giving my money to independent businesses, but only if I think they're great or I believe in them. I do think that it's very important for the people in business relationships to trust and even enjoy each other. I fantasize about a non-profit organization that overlooks the ethics of businesses. In order to be a part of it, you'd have to pass all sorts of ethics tests and follow up with it. ¶ "DIY," literally means do-it-yourself. But if everyone followed the literal definition, then everyone would need a button machine, which is impossible! As part of this punk-ethic community, DIY is someone who participates with the community. It's how I started. I looked to get buttons made by the big union button companies. Out of about five, only one did one-inch buttons and they were \$75 for 100. It's just not profitable enough for them to do these one-inch buttons for so few customers. Seeing this it only confirmed the idea to start the button company for the punk-ethic crowd.

Steve: I define "independent" as someone who has no strings attached and no affiliates. The money from SchUeLL Inc. does not go to some larger business, nor does it go anywhere else, but back into SchUeLL Inc. ¶ As for DIY, I am doing this myself. I have no employees. If I want 5000 buttons to get made, I get to do them. I lay it all out, print it, cut them, assemble them, write out the receipt, package it, mail it. Every aspect of making a button is handled by yours truly.

How would you define "selling out" for yourself? What boundary would you have to cross that would make you feel uncomfortable about what you are doing?

Christen: Doing something against your better judgment for money or fame. I've done buttons for major-label bands and even an ad agencies. I did buttons for Beck. I think he's really creative and I'm proud to support/be supported by him. I don't feel like I'm selling out. But without trying to get too philosophical, people want different things out of life. If you disagree with them, try not to participate or revolt. I turn down bootleg and hate-oriented artwork.

Steve: I would become instantly uncomfortable when I lose control. For example, if I accepted a sponsorship from, let's say, that to me is "selling out." But if I still had 100% control, and Sony came to me for buttons, fine. Taking their money on my terms is still within my level of control, but if they somehow came to invest in my business,

or involved themselves on the payroll, then no. This is where it gets sticky, because I could go into business with a partner and the control would be 50/50. I wouldn't consider that selling out . . . however I would be uncomfortable. As Run DMC might say, "it's tricky."

Without being specific or pointing fingers, have you had any negative experiences running your business that have made you want to re-negotiate doing it? What keeps you going when the work gets tedious?

Christen: I've literally had three customers in five years that made me really angry. That's out of about 1,500 customers, so it's not bad. But I think that one customer thought they had a coolness factor, which allowed them to act as if it was a huge favor to let me make their buttons. Punk-ethic people understand that it's an exchange and it all runs smooth, but the bad eggs have really tested me. I've refused to work for a few days because of it. I think I take so much pride in the work, that I take it personally when people get jerky. But it's so rare. I get a lot of thank yous from happy customers and I love that! That's part of what keeps me going. It may be cornball, but I like getting my ego stroked that way.

Steve: Ironically merely a few days ago, I had my first asshole customer. First, I returned his phone call on my dime and he proceeds to put me on hold to have conversations with his co-workers. Then when he finally deems me important enough, I am told "Well I have my own template, and I'll be providing the artwork, so you can just charge me less since I did all the work." My response was: "Fine, send your art, and your template, but I'll rescan it and put into my template and you will pay the set prices like everyone else or you will not get buttons." Some days it does get tedious, but overall it really is fun for me to do this. I honestly don't mind. I have been doing it for over four years now, and it's not gotten boring yet!

So why do you love buttons so much that you want to devote so much time to creating them?

Christen: What's not to love? They're little signifiers. They say something about you. They're traditionally punk. They're small enough, so you can wear a bunch. Plus, I think they start conversations. Hey, if any couples or best friends met through talking about the button they were wearing, lemme know! I wanna do something about that, like a couple of free buttons of the two of yas. Anyhow, I think buttons are an interesting communicator between people.

Steve: I don't know, but for me, it's a proud way to display what you love. It's the collector in all of us, I think. ☺

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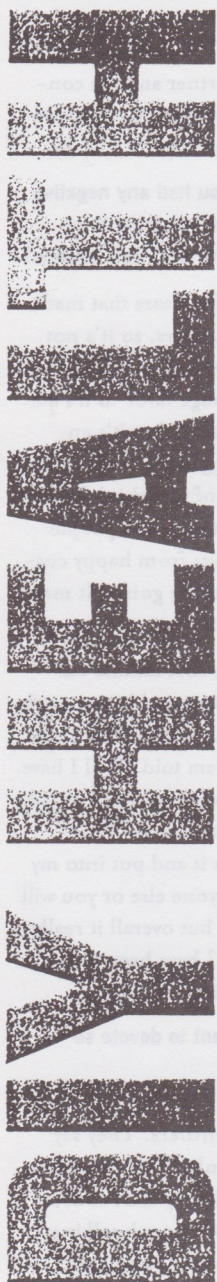
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in sickness and no wealth

Making Your Own



Forget the ineffective overpriced Johnson & Johnson First Aid Kits you can purchase in pharmacies for about \$30.00 for a few Band-Aids, scissors that don't cut and enough gauze to wrap around an injured pinky toe once. You can make this kit for less, depending what you already have available in your house. It's truly great if you are traveling and away from home a lot. I made this kit for my boyfriend's band when they toured, and it did come in handy quite a few times—unless those bastards lied to me.

I tried to build a kit that used the most versatile herbs possible (like tea tree oil) and also included a number of things that you probably already have lying around your house (salt, honey, pain killer). For any over-the-counter medication I list below, you can find cheap off-brand alternatives for a lot less than the name-brand equivalent. Also, I've found that the dollar store is an excellent source for items like Tylenol equivalent, peroxide, rubbing alcohol and other things. Also, don't forget to include this issue of *Punk Planet* into your new first aid kit for reference. I've even included a handy chart!

The list below includes both the ingredients you need and how to use them. Good luck and be safe!

Apple Cider Vinegar Known for its ability to kill infectious microorganisms, and has astringent properties as well, apple cider vinegar helps with sore throats, insect bites, sunburns, and Athlete's Foot.

For a sore throat you can do two things with this elixir. 1) To soothe your throat, gargle with 2 tbsp. of vinegar and 1 tbsp. of water. 2) To thin out mucus and unleash its antibacterial powers, drink three glasses per day of 2 tbsp. of vinegar

plus 1 tbsp. of honey in a glass of water. Drink in small sips.

You may also use the vinegar for insect bites: apply a cold compress of straight vinegar to the swollen area.

To prevent blisters and relieve burning of sunburns you can add a half-pint of vinegar to your bath water.

You can use vinegar and water as a footbath for Athlete's foot as well. If the skin around your toes is not cracked and oozing, you can place your feet in a small tub of vinegar. I would accompany this treatment with an over the counter medicine too.

Meat Tenderizer Used to neutralize the venom in an insect bite and stop the pain instantly. Mix enough meat tenderizer with water to make a paste, then place on the affected area.

Baking Soda If you do not have any meat tenderizer on hand, then baking soda would be the second choice. Baking soda will relieve the itch/pain and inflammation, but it will not neutralize the venom. Make a paste with water and then place it on the effected area.

You may also use baking soda for sunburns. If you are burned in just a small area, such as your shoulders, then you can make a poultice. To do this, you would mix enough baking soda and water together to make a paste. Next apply to the burned skin then place gauze over the paste. Do this as often as desired. If you are burned over large parts of your body and a poultice is not practical, you may add a couple of cups to your bath water, and just soak.

Salt and Sugar For a sore throat and bronchitis, all you need to do is add 1 tsp. of salt to a warm/hot glass of water. Gargle as needed.

If you are suffering from diarrhea, you should drink a pinch of salt and a pinch of sugar in a glass of water during your bout. This drink will help replace your electrolytes and prevent dehydration.

Honey Prevents growth of various bacteria and promotes healing. It's great for sunburns, cuts and coughs.

For sunburns you can apply honey to help prevent scarring and relieve some of the pain. Apply honey to a piece of gauze and then place directly onto the burn. Change the dressings 3-4 times daily. You may do the same for abrasions and cuts too.

For coughs, you can add honey to a cup of tea. If you don't have tea, you may add it to a cup of plain hot water. Or, you can just eat it plain. Let it dissolve in your mouth slowly.

Olive or vegetable oil Great moisturizer for your skin, but also great for diluting essential oils too. For example, lavender oil is great for sunburns, but if you are sunburned over a large area

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

First Aid Kit

by Angel Page

and you have a small vial of lavender oil, you can stretch it out by mixing it with veggie or olive oil.

Listerine equivalent You can gargle with a Listerine equivalent for a sore throat. If the mouthwash is too strong/harsh, you may dilute it with some water. This should help kill off some of that bad bacterium and bring some relief to your sore throat.

Hard candy or Riccola drops Good for soothing a sore throat.

Soap After assessing the situation of a skin wound, decide whether it needs medical attention or not. [Note: you must get tetanus shot every 10 years. If you are overdue for your shot, you have 72 hours after you have cut/punctured yourself pretty badly.] If you can take care of the wound yourself, you should wash it well with soap and water (if there is debris/dirt in the wound, see Hydrogen Peroxide). Next apply an antibiotic ointment: tea tree oil, lavender oil, or honey, whatever your preference may be. Cover with gauze or a Band-Aid. Change the dressing three to four times daily.

Hydrogen peroxide Use hydrogen peroxide if the wound has dirt or debris in it—you can bubble the bad stuff out. Once clean, apply an antibiotic ointment: tea tree oil, lavender oil, or honey. Cover with gauze or a Band-Aid. Change dressing 3-4 times daily.

Hydrogen peroxide also is a great mouth rinse for canker sores. I rinse with it a couple times a day until the sores disappear.

7-Up For nausea or gut rot, sip on a warm can of 7-up. That should bring on some relief.

Rubbing alcohol Good for dealing with poison ivy/oak/sumac. Once you've noticed that your dumb ass is standing in a patch of poison ivy, you still have a chance to get out there with minimal damage. The oil from the leaves doesn't absorb instantly, so get the hell out of the patch and wipe the affected area down with alcohol.

Deodorant Not for being stinky, but for protecting your legs against poison ivy/oak/sumac. If you know ahead of time that you are going to be in a heavily wooded area, you may rub anti-per-spirant deodorant on your legs and ankles to prevent the oil from the leaves from absorbing into your skin. Once you are done gal-livanting in the woods, wash your legs with soap and water.

White shoe polish If you have gotten the dreaded itch from poison ivy/oak/sumac you can use white shoe polish on the scabs/sores. The clay in the polish will dry and soak up the oil. If you don't have any white shoe polish lying around, don't feel you have to go and purchase the polish for this purpose only. You may also use an over-the-counter medicine too.

Antihistamine If you notice swelling from an insect bite, you can take an over-the-counter medication to help stop and reduce

the allergic reaction you are having with the venom. Beware, anti-histamines will make you tired, so if you are on the road, be very careful! Side effects of antihistamines are drowsiness, dry mouth, blurred vision and/or constipation. **Don't take this medication if you are being treated for glaucoma, urinary incontinence, retention, or colon spasms.**

Hydrocortisone cream You can purchase the no-name cheap brand to help relieve itching or swelling of insect bites. Just slather on and feel instant relief!

Tea tree oil This oil has excellent antiseptic, fungicidal and antiviral properties. You can use it for just about everything! You can slather it on insect bites to speed up healing and prevent infection of the bite site.

For a sore throat you can add 4-5 drops of tea tree oil to a glass of water and gargle as often as you wish.

You may rub it on a sunburn also (remember you can dilute it with olive/veggie oil).

Tea tree oil is great for first and second degree burns too. Dab on burned skin, then cover with gauze. Change three to four times daily.

For Athlete's Foot, slather on toes, and keep doing it until you kill that funky fungus off!

You may also use tea tree oil on cuts and abrasions too. After you have cleansed the wound, you can apply the oil, then cover with gauze or Band-Aids.

Last, but not least, to speed up healing and reduce the inflammation of bruises, you may apply oil as often as you wish.

Lavender oil I swear tea tree oil and lavender oil is interchangeable, except for one important difference: **You don't want to take lavender oil internally.** So, follow the directions for tea tree oil except for the gargle remedy and athletes foot.

Vitamin C Vitamin C is essential for enhancing your immunity. You should take some at the first signs of exhaustion / stress / sickness. To figure out what dosage is right for you, take 1,000 milligrams every hour or so. Once you have diarrhea, cut back 1,000 mg. and that will be your own personal dose. Some people can take up to 14,000 mg of Vitamin C, however some people have a lower tolerance— I can only take 4,000 mg. Good luck!

Tylenol Your normal body temperature ranges from 98°F-98.6°F. Now, if you are sick and running a temperature, most of the time you can reduce it by using a Tylenol equivalent. **If your temperature gets up to 104°F and you can not reduce it after two hours of home treatment, you should seek medical treatment.**

Ibuprofen Good for reducing inflammation and swelling. Follow directions on the bottle.

Echinacea Another essential ingredient for enhancing your

A handy first aid kit reference guide

Insect Bites/Stings Apple Cider Vinegar Antihistamine Hydrocortisone Cream Meat Tenderizer Baking Soda Tea Tree Oil Lavender Oil	Sore Throat Apple Cider Vinegar Riccola drops/hard candy Vitamin C Echinacea Salt Listerine Equivalent Tea Tree Oil	Wounds Honey Antibiotic Ointment Soap & Water Tylenol equivalent Hydrogen Peroxide Tea Tree Oil Lavender Oil	Diarrhea Pepto Bismol equivalent Salt + Sugar + Water
Bronchitis Apple Cider Vinegar Honey Riccola Drops Vitamin C Echinacea Salt Tylenol equivalent Ibuprofen	Sunburn Apple Cider Vinegar Honey Tylenol equivalent Ibuprofen Lavender Oil Tea Tree Oil Baking Soda	Poison Ivy/Oak/Sumac Rubbing Alcohol Antiperspirant Deodorant White Shoe Polish Hydrocortisone cream	Laryngitis Salt Riccola drops/hard candy Echinacea Vitamin C Honey
			Athlete's Foot Tea Tree Oil Apple Cider Vinegar
			1st & 2nd Degree Burns Lavender Oil Tea Tree Oil
		Nausea/Gut Rot Pepto Bismol equivalent 7-up Antacids	Bruises Tea Tree Oil Lavender Oil

immunity. Buy a bottle of capsules and take when you are feeling stressed/sick/fatigued. **Do not take this herb if you are allergic to the daisy family, such as sunflower seeds. Also, you do not want to take this herb longer than eight weeks at a time. People with AIDS, HIV infections, MS, TB, Leukemia, Lupus, Scleroderma, Rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune disorders should not take Echinacea.**

Antibiotic Ointment Slather on after you clean your wound/abrasions. Also good for severe dry hands and cuticles.

Pepto Bismol equivalent This is good for diarrhea/gut rot/nausea. Follow directions on the bottle. Beware, this product contains bismuth: it will turn your shit black and leave a funny taste in your mouth, but it's OK. **Warning: people who are allergic to aspirin, people who are on blood thinning meds,**

methotrexate, drugs to treat gout and diabetes should also not take Pepto Bismol.

Antacids This is also good for gut rot. Follow directions on packaging. **Don't take antacid if you have kidney disease. Also, if taken with the following antibiotics; tetracycline, cipro, floxin, or noroxin will decrease the effectiveness of the antibiotic.**

Other First Aid Essentials that need no explanation:

Band-Aids
Thermometer
Tweezers
Gauze and Tape
Scissors
Spoon

Good luck building your first aid kit. Stay healthy! ☺

Please feel free to write me with any questions or concerns: Angel Page c/o Makoto Recordings PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005 or via e-mail at: angelpage@hotmail.com

Sources:

Home Remedies A to Z by Tanja Hirschsteiner
The Home Remedies Handbook by John H. Renner, MD & the Consumer Health Information Research Institute
Health Wise Handbook by Healthwise Incorporated
Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch, MD & Phyllis A. Balch, C.N.C.
Country Doctor's Book of Folk Remedies and Healing Wisdom by Ara Der Marderosian, Phd., Consultant
Aromatherapy by Julia Lawless
The Alternative Health and Medicine Encyclopedia by James E. Marti
Over-the-counter Medicine Cabinet Medicines by Richard P. Donjon, R. Ph.
Tyler's Honest Herbal by Steven Foster & Varro E. Tyler, PhD

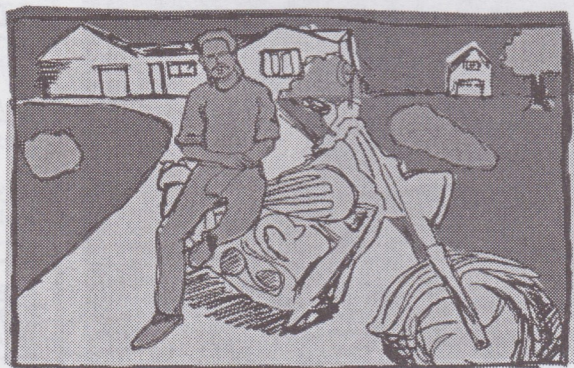
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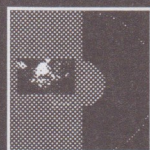
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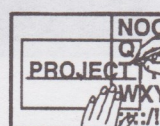
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Jawbreaker, Jenny FiccioLo,
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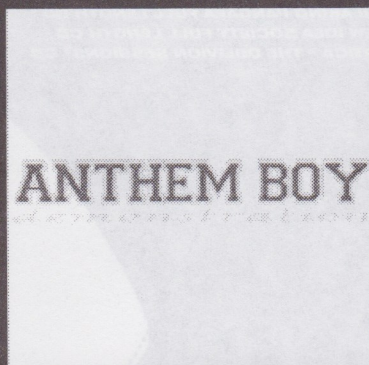


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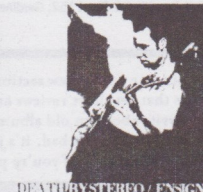
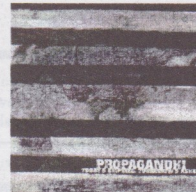
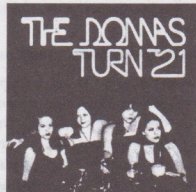
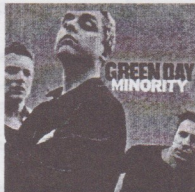


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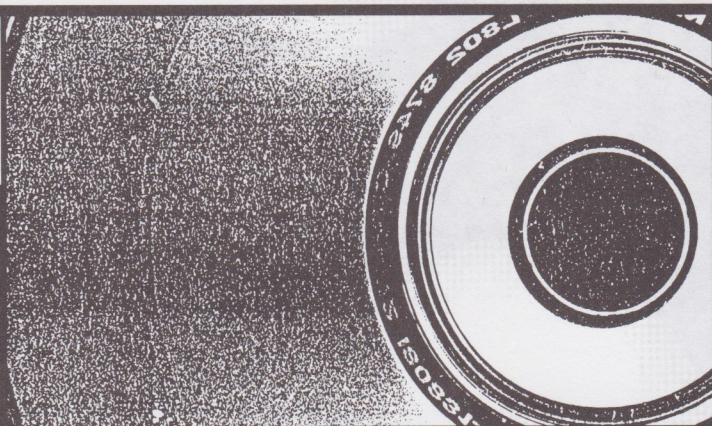
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PLASTIC MUSIC



ALL SYSTEMS GO! – I'LL BE YOUR RADIO, CDEP

Well if you don't know by now, All Systems Go! is the new punk super group featuring the singer of the Doughboys and the guitarist and singer of Big Drill Car. Now honestly this EP and their previous album weren't as good as the former bands in their prime, but this is still really good and they deserve some props for influencing countless bands with their original groups. Remember when every town had a couple bands trying to sound like All or Big Drill Car? This EP has 4 songs, 2 of which were on their debut full length and the other 2 are unreleased. The 2 previously released songs are actually the better ones, but it's nice to hear Frank Daly's vocals on one of the new songs, since John from the Doughboys sings most of the songs while Frank plays bass. Hey, is Frank even in the band still? The liner notes seem to suggest that they now have a new bassist and drummer. Hmm. Anywho, "All I Want" is definitely a jam and makes me nostalgic for the days of Big Drill Car, the Doughboys, the Hard-Ons and Mega City Four. Back when pop punk bands had long hair. What's up with that, Frank? (NS)

BEDFORD/THE SUPER EIGHTEEN/SOMETIMES 7/FLOTATION WALLS, 4 WAY SPLIT CD

Four bands, twenty-three tracks. Bedford = three guys playing fun pop-punk. The Super Eighteen = three guys playing cutesy indie-pop with songs that make you say "aw...". Sometimes 7 = the type of music you'd expect to hear in the background of a trailer for one of those summer "teen"

movies. And finally, the Flotation Walls = keyboards, and upright bass, special effects, and all sorts of other stuff making them the most eclectic of the bunch. Their songs are all different, and the one that stands out right now sounds sort of like the song they play in the background of a Country Time Lemonade commercial or something. Yes, I watch too much TV. (ES)

BONECRUSHER – FOLLOWERS OF A BRUTAL CALLING, CD

Bonecrushin' dude! This five piece tears it up, playing old school catchy street punk anthems for the South California scene. "Followers of a Brutal Calling" opens with the title track, and tears through fifteen more catchy songs that will appeal to fans of Sham 69, Blitz and The Business. The lyrics seem to alternate between standard street punk themes, and personal songs about love and values. It seems to me that there aren't a whole lot of bands like this, which play street punk but are expressing their feelings about love and shit. The only problem with this release is that they fed their egos too much and published too many pictures of themselves and forgot to print the lyrics to all of their songs. I bet they were about puppies and butterflies. All in all, a solid, rockin' record. (RE)

THE COUNT – ROMANCE IN REVERB, 7"

YES! Just when I thought I only had soft records this month, this brilliant 7" takes a spin on my tattered turntable. This is one hell of a record. The "borrowed from art school" packaging misleads, as this is as fast and alive as anything I've heard lately. The Count isn't easy to compare to other

1654 – I'M GONNA STAB YOU, 7"

I hope I have the band name correct, it isn't that clear on the cover or labels. Female fronted band that has a real musical sound that is jazzy-punk rock kinda thing that is too hard to understand. This single really stands out from the other 100+ singles I listened to this month. (EA)

Tiger Suit Records PO Box 15482, Long Beach, CA 90815

ACTION LEAGUE – CLEAR VIEW MIRROR, 7"

Pop songs that are finely crafted ala Elvis Costello. (EA)

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ADKINS, HASIL – 911 BUBBLEGUM, 7"

The master of complete slop is doing it once again. This single is proof once again that you could throw Hasil in a kitchen with a tape recorder and in two hours have two LPs and 8 singles. (EA)

Ball Records PO Box 1152, Gardiner, ME 04345

ADOLF & THE PISS ARTISTS – ZERO HOUR, CD

Modern day Oi that has more in common with eighties practitioners like One Way System than say Sham 69. Surprised me with the Suffragette City cover! Way better than their live show that I saw a few years back. More songs of pride without elaboration. (AS)

GMM Records, PO. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333 (? zip hard to read)

ALL SYSTEMS GO! – I'LL BE YOUR RADIO, CDEP

See review above.

Bad Taste Records, Stora Soderg. 38, S – 222 23 Lund, Sweden

ANTHEM EIGHTY EIGHT – Q: AND PROGRESS? A: AND PROGRESS, CDEP

Beautiful from the first note. Totally interesting music that punches and kicks the shit out of the listener. Take the finest elements of late 80's SE HC and combine them with killer new school bands like Born Dead Icons and From Ashes Rise and you may get an idea of how essential this is to your library. (MY)

Schematics Records, No Idea, POB 14636, Gainesville FL, 32604

ASSEL/SECOND THOUGHT, SPLIT 7" E.P.

This split 7" comes with a handy little booklet that has track listing and little comments about the songs and/or English translations. Assel are four guys from Sweden playing fast metal-core. It's in Swedish, but they have their lyrics translated in the booklet. Second Thought play political rock-metal that reminds me a bit of local heroes Nine Shocks Terror, Swedish style. I like this a lot. (ES)

email nounty@hotmail.com

AVSKUM – IN THE SPIRIT OF MASS DESTRUCTION, CD

Dirt punk from Sweden that attempts to be political with the "us against them" mentality without really saying much. The music has more of a metal edge kind of like the mid to later years of the Exploited. It rocks out, but that's about it. (DM)

Prank PO BOX 410892 San Francisco, CA 94141

About our new review section: We still review all the records we receive, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

bands, but I think they're like a cross between Dis Sucks and Charles Bronson, although less metal than the former and more obnoxious than the latter. You get 8 songs on a 7", and each is faster than the fastest record you heard today. The vocals are very high pitched at times, but they don't sound like a jokester's hardcore put-on: a real maniac appears to be singing. The lyrics are stereotypical anti-squatter but pseudo-political rants, but you won't care what the singer's screaming about 'cuz it's all just so fresh and lively. The packaging and lyric sheet hint that this is some minor project after which everyone in the band will grow up and move on to more lucrative, less punk endeavors, but that'd be a fucking shame. I hope I'm misconstruing the "we're itching to grow out of punk" vibe that's lurking behind this 'cuz it's brilliant. (AE)

CRASH VINYL - HIGH FIVE YOUR SEX DRIVE, CD

This five song EP of garagey, new wavy music draws on early 80s influences, yet still rocks and hits hard. Picture the Talking Heads, but louder and more punk. The singer has a kind of fake-British accent thing going on, but it isn't annoying and actually works pretty well. The songs are very noisy and mid-fi, and the sound quality is one of the most interesting things about it. It is a really loud CD, and it has a scratchiness that sounds like vinyl. The guitar is loud with fuzzy distortion, and it is way up in the mix. Actually, it sounds like everything is up in the mix. The organ/keyboard on the first two songs is excellent. Hell, the first two songs are excellent. Unfortunately, the organ is only prominent on the first two songs. The third song is good as well, and the fourth is decent, but the last song leaves something to be desired. Although the songs are progressively less interesting, this is a great effort overall. (BJM)

DALTONIC - RADIO ON, CD

I already own this CD, but I haven't listened to it that much until now. I have their last CD too, but I haven't listened to that much either. Daltonic is really good, but there's something keeping them from being great. Maybe it's the vocals. They're a little rock and roll. They're not bad; they just take a little getting used to. The music is awesome. It sounds more like Dag Nasty than Dag Nasty did on their last 2 albums. The cool guitar and soulful vocals also

remind me of the first American Standard album or even later Government Issue. They even do a cover of G.I.'s "Understand" on here. I think those 3 bands that I compared them too are a good indicator of Daltonic. Really talented and melodic, but they probably won't be appreciated while they're together because kids can't mosh or stage dive to them. (NS)

THE DOWN-N-OUTS - SUBTERRANEAN BEAT PUNK BLUES, CD

These guys have the whole classic unoriginal sixties garage rock tied down to the tee. They got the haircuts, the clothes, the Vox guitars, and hell, they probably even have pointed little boots. But all that aside, they make up for it all with a good rockin' sound. Super fuzzed guitar leads blast through the organ filled, short, ten uptempo cuts on this CD. This will find some time in my player getting my ass wiggle primed for a good night out swigging brews and listening to sorry lame bands making me wish that I was at home with this CD. Think early Cynics crossed with the simple brevity of nuggets punk rock. There were a couple of things that I found odd about this though. One, even though it claims to be in mono, I believe that a harmonica solo panned speakers making these guys stereo sellouts or they ingested too much electric Kool-aid. Also this appears to be a CD-r, even though the covers are of high quality color print, the label is from Switzerland, and it comes with a snazzy one inch button. (AS)

FALSIES, THE - THEORY + MOTION, CD

This is my fave of the month and it was a total surprise. I think I had seen their name before and kind of assumed that they were a poppy punk band, which isn't way off, but their name invokes bands like The Swirlies or something way more poppy. These guys sound like a bunch of ex hardcore kids playing punk rock now. They remind me of bands like Lifetime, Dillinger 4 or Pinhead Circus. Their sound is fast and slightly raw (dude), but they know how to write good melodies and play cool guitar parts. It's hard not to be reeled in by the first song, which begins with a sound bite (John Cusack?) and then belts into a driving punk song with urgent vocals and fast drums and guitar. They slow it up on some of the songs and sometimes they take on more of an old school hardcore sound, but they always make it interesting by straying from the conventions of the various styles. I can hardly even concentrate on

9 BEDFORD/THE SUPEREIGHTEEN/SOMETIMES 7/FLOTATION WALLS, 4 WAY SPLIT CD

See review above.

Grub Records 400 Park Rd. Parsippany, NJ 07054-1737

THE BLOW UP - DEAD STARS, 7"

Balls out rock and roll. It is that simple. (EA)

Empty Records PO Box 12034, Seattle, WA 98102

9 BONECRUSHER - FOLLOWERS OF A BRUTAL CALLING, CD

See review above.

Outsider Records, PO Box 92708, Long Beach, CA 90809

BOTTLES AND SKULLS - AMPED THE FUCK UP, 7"

Fast, old-school hardcore punk. Song titles like: Waste of time, American Dreams, Fight, and First Love, Then War. Heavy and solid recording makes this a good single. It would have been too much on a full length. I'm glad it's short. (RE)

735 Grove St. #4, San Francisco, CA 94102

BOY SETS FIRE - SUCKERPUNCH TRAINING, CDEP

3 new songs from the bad boys of political alternative metal! Actually, one new song, a cover of "Rocket Man" and a spoken word track about how the U.S. rules! Or something like that. I can't pay attention

that long. Hey, look at the neat CD. (NS)

Join The Team Player Records, Altöttingstr. 6A, 81673 Munchen, Germany

THE BRIEFS/THE SPITS - SPLIT, 7"

The Briefs are unbelievable - total 1977 pop ala Vibrators, etc. "(I Think) My Baby is a Communist" could have come off of any KBD series and "Silver Bullet" as an ode to killing Bob Seger, fun stuff. The Spits are a fuzzed out arty band that have a unique sound that is hard to listen to after being blown away from The Briefs. I highly suggest this single. (EA)

Dirtnap Records PO Box 21249 Seattle, WA 98111

BROKE - FILE UNDER SOUNDTRACKS, CD

Weird art rock with horns more evil than those of Lucifer himself! As they say, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, you guys are Broke, and you should fix it! Man, you guys just walked right into that one! (NS)

Smog Veil Records, 774 Mays #10-PMB 454 I.V., NV 89451

BURN IT DOWN - LET THE DEAD BURY THE DEAD, CD

This is heavy as fuck. Not quite just HC or metal, but has that severe edge that you can feel in your bones. Thick, angry and has that sound that screams beat down. Sounds like something off of Relapse or Century.

Interesting cover of the Stones "Paint It Black". (DM)

Escape Artist Records, PO Box 472 Downingtown, PA 19335

CALIFORNIA LIGHTENING - ST, 7"

This reminds me of early 90's alternative bands like Belly, Juliana Hatfield or Dinosaur Jr. without the guitar proficiency. The music is bouncy and catchy and the female vocals are really good. (NS)

Sound On Sound, P.O. Box 687, Berkeley, CA 94704-0687

CARVER - SONGS FOR RUSTY, CD

A scrappy emo/indie type band from England. Somewhere between Brit pop and Midwest emo with a lot of speaking vocal parts. It's okay, but isn't England dreary enough without this kind of music? Why don't you guys throw in some Stupids or Ripcord covers? That would be bodacious! (NS)

Seismic Records, 86 Carlton Rd., Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 8PQ, England

CHANGING NAMES - BUMPY ROAD, CD

I think I've heard this before... it was called "Discount" and it was much better. (ES)

P.O. Box 965 Alpine, CA 91903

CHOKE - NEEDLESS TO SAY, CD

Clean Cali-style punk a la Fat Wreck Chords. These guys are from Canada, though. The vocalist is overly

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

Looking at my classic picks thus far at PP (The Crucifucks, GG Allin, Anti-Heros, and ANTISEEN), I realized that I have yet to highlight a pop-punk band. As much as I love other strains of punk, pop-punk still gets me going and I'm not ashamed to admit it. That's why I'm featuring The Connie Dungs' debut demo, "Songs for Swinging Lovers." Available on CD with their second demo, this tape really grabbed me when it came out in 1995. And frankly, I'm shocked that this band remains an obscurity. They've put out countless singles, two demos, and FOUR FULL-LENGTH ALBUMS in just five years, but no one's noticed! The only time I saw them live, I had the distinct feeling that I was the sole person there who knew who the fuck these geniuses were! Brandon Dung has a very distinct, nasal voice that will steal your punk heart in an instant. Add a slight southern accent, and you're left with one of the most recognizable singers in the history of punk rock. "Songs for Swinging Lovers" is a total classic, with hilarious lyrics and a unique brand of snottiness stemming from the crazy vocals. I challenge even the most hardened punk elitist to listen to the song "Teenage Punks on Talk Shows" without smiling and bobbing. While the band has become more sophisticated musically since their raw demos, ALL of their subsequent records have rocked as well, including their latest, "Eternal Bad Luck Charm." You'd best check 'em out! FIVE full CD's (and some singles) are available through Mutant Pop.

Besides the new Connie Dungs album, I've also been really into M.D.C.'s "Now More Than Ever: 1980-2000" anthology, The Motherfuckers LP on Beer City, and the Spider Babies LP.

this review because I'm listening to them right now. If you like punk or hardcore, but not exclusively, then you should like this. Nay, you will like this! (NS)

THE GITS — SEAFISH LOUISVILLE, CD

When grunge was the thing in Seattle the Gits were hidden behind a wall of famous and soon to be famous bands. When Mia Zapata died seven years ago the Seattle scene was shaken up. The Gits were a great guitar driven rock and roll band with a great songwriter and singer in Mia. Her tough vocals offered a different sound that was appreciated live as much as on their records. The live tracks on this disc sound wonderful and give a great picture of the show they put on. Most of the Gits material seemed to have been released after her death, this being the newest. This CD contains live material, unreleased material and a great CD-ROM feature with videos, photos, and lyrics. The Gits were a great band and it is proven with the freshness of this disc years later. Please visit www.thegits.com to get the full story on this great band that was cut short in their prime. (EA)

HEADCOATS — ELEMENTARY HEADCOATS, 2XCD OR 3XLP

The Elementary Headcoats, the Singles 1990-1999 is about as essential as they come. First off I am a huge fan of Mr. Childish, but if you aren't I urge you to buy this 2XLP or 2XCD immediately. This would be a great place to

start to learn to love the Headcoats. They have released 23 full lengths and even more singles (this doesn't include his other bands and solo stuff, which bring the numbers to the Hundreds for sure). This isn't a complete discography, but rather 50 songs taken from close to as many singles. I think that Billy, Bruce and Johnny have put out some of the best garage singles in the last 10 years as the Headcoats. The simple songs, with crafty lyrics and no nonsense production could easily remind you of some of the great delta blues musicians of best. Don't get this wrong though, this is punk rock for sure. Some tracks contain the Headcoats Sect, featuring Don Craine of the Downliners Sect. I would have liked to have seen this as a 4XCD that contained all the songs from the singles and compilations, but I am being greedy. If you are unaware of Billy Childish and the Headcoats I strongly urge you to get your hands on this and then take a listen to his other bands: Milkshakes, Mighty Caesars, Headcoatees, Billy Childish and the Blackhands, etc. Are you ready to go down this long road? (EA)

THE HOPE CONSPIRACY — COLDBLUE, CD

1991 or 1992: I see my first Shelter show and buy two Equal Vision releases. 2001: as much as I like the Shelter video that's on MTV-X every day, I still only have two Equal Vision releases to my name. But fuck it, who am I kidding? If it's put in my face, I still like ignorant hardcore. Thanks, Punk

whiny, and all the songs sound the same. One should never use the phrase "needless to say." If something is "needless to say," then why say it? (BJM)

Smallman Records, PO Box 352, RPO Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 3V3

THE CONFORMISTS — S/T, 7"

(Try to say something nice...) The picture of the cat someone hung was interesting but tasteless. I bet they like the Melvins. I like the Melvins. I'll listen to them instead. (DM)

theconformists_@hotmail.com

♫ THE COUNT — ROMANCE IN REVERB, 7"

See review above.

Count Records, PO Box 1161, Claremont, CA 91711-1161

♫ CRASH VINYL — HIGH FIVE YOUR SEX DRIVE, CD

See review above.

Bass Propulsion Laboratories (BassPropulsionLaboratories.com)

CRAZY MARY — ASTRONAUT DUBS, CD

Weird kind of Pixies-ish rock with female male vocals. This is some kind of weird remix album that has two versions of each song done slightly different. Not very good. (JK)

Crazy Mary, PO box 6462 NYC, NY 10128-0014

CRAZY MARY — SHE COMES IN WAVES, CD

12 psychedelic punk songs. The disc should come with drugs. (BC)

Humming Records

♫ DALTONIC — RADIO ON, CD

See review above.

Phyte Records, PO. Box 90363, Washington DC 20090

DARKER DAY TOMORROW — NO SLEEP IN FORTY DAYS, CD

I wish I could sing like this guy. Dark shitty hardcore/heavy metal sludge, bordering on absolutely unintelligible. (JK)

Blegh! Redstar Records, 762 Upper James St. Suite 335, Hamilton, ON, Canada L9C3A2

DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL — THE SWISS ARMY ROMANCE, CD

I blame Saves The Day for this. Their acoustic EP probably inspired this crappy acoustic emo. I'm sure this guy used to be in some sort of "punk" band, but this has no business being heard outside of the local open mic night. 12 year old girls will love this though. (NS)

Drive-Thru Records, P.O. Box 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE — FORBIDDEN LOVE, CD EP

Wimpy, melodic quasi-rock. There's actually not much rock to it. The melodies are decent, but the

utter lack of energy leaves the whole thing flat. (BJM)

Barsuk Records, PO Box 22546, Seattle WA 98122

THE DECALS — YOU, 7"

The Decals present a two song seven inch containing some superb Muffs inspired punk rock. Catchy, well executed, straight forward and pleasing to the ears. I'd rave on, but they sound just like the Muffs. And too bad that they have a car on the cover. (AS)

Fan Attic Records, PO Box 391494, Cambridge, MA 02139

DEE DEE RAMONE — GREATEST AND LATEST, CD

Though this has to have some major label ties I thought I should still review this one. What the hell is the point of Dee Dee re-recording 16 songs that are predominately Ramones classics? This spells M-O-N-E-Y, too bad it will not make any. (EA)

Conspiracy Music PO Box 461975 LA, CA 90046

THE DICKHEADS — DICK TEASE, CD

I don't shy away from judging records by their cover. One look at this one and I thought, "This looks like some sexist shit." Then I put the disc in and realize that it is some sexist shit. Lyrics like "I Want You / Sleepin Next to Me / (that means fuck me ho)" and "You're just a dicktease / all you are / just a fucking

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)

David Peel & The Lower East Side - The American Revolution, LP - After years of scouring numerous used record bins, you start to do some pretty crazy impulse buying. Sometimes it's a huge waste of money, but other times you end up with a neat little gem of an album. Such is the case with David Peel & the lower east side's "The American Revolution" LP. The instant that I heard the chorus, "we are from the lower east side/we don't care if we live or die" from the lead track I was hooked on the pro drug, anti cop, and anti war satirical craziness from these late sixties hippies. These guys love to get high, and they don't mask it in some phony baloney Lucy in the Sky type of poetry. Their complete disregard for law enforcement is non stop, asking listeners "every time you see a cop say oink oink!" I have heard their earlier album, which is more akin to the Fugs' brand of bongo driven folk rock, but this time around these guys got a good solid backing band with a drummer and bass player. This ain't no hippie noodling, psych out shit neither. Just straight up raucous and bouncy music that perfectly compliments their anti society lyrical lunacy. If you smoke dope, this record is a must, and if you don't, like myself, then this February 1970 masterpiece is a perfect example of where punk rock evolved from. God bless Elektra records - what fine taste they had. I believe that this is now available on CD via rhinohandmade.com internet only thing.

Albums that I got as Christmas gifts include Mudhoney - March to Fuzz, The Flaming Lips - Oh My Gawd it's, Swell Maps - International Rescue, and Simon & Garfunkel - Bookends.

Planet! The Hope Conspiracy's pure and magnificent. I can't figure out the contradictory lyrics (are these guys of faith or normal/smart faithless guys?), but the music does a great deal for me. There's a painstakingly beautiful quality to the HARDNESS of this stuff. Frenetic rhythm changes spanning from slow and tough to slower and tougher, melded with neck vein-popping screams effectively get the kids dancing every time. The album only speeds up a few times, and when it does, it's only a temporary break foreshadowing a deadly mosh part. So how 'bout them lyrics? There's some definite jabs at Christian/American bullshit here, but there's also enough hokey weirdness to fill all of your local churches and synagogues. Am I stupid? This thing should come with an answer key for dolts like me. Like that cardboard tool schoolteachers have to calculate averages or something. If anyone with an MA in hardcore lyric interpretation has some answers for me, I'd love the info. (AE)

HOT WATER MUSIC - NEVER ENDER, 2XCD OR 2XLP

This is one of those records that most people will own way before this review prints. I am not a big Hot Water Music fan. I haven't gone to see them 50 times or have all their records. I own a few singles and all their full lengths and I honestly enjoy them a lot, they are my dark

secret. This record is well produced, it sounds real "full", "thick" and all those words that are used when bands want their record to sound professional. In Hot Water Music this is a good thing. The vocal play on this record could be their best to date. This may not be the first place to start with Hot Water Music, but many a new fans could be made with this record. If you have avoided this band because they were popular or that they are an "emo" band I strongly suggest that you give this LP a listen. If you buy this release through No Idea or through Hot Water Music, instead of a store, you will get an extra disc of material that is well worth the extra effort. The bonus disc in not limited you can still get it on vinyl or compact disc. (EA)

JAPANESE - THE SOCIAL DISEASE, CD

A pop band stuck in a new wave box? That's the first thing that comes into mind when I first heard this disc. The third release by this Houston band comes across as such. There seems to be a sudden (if the last few years can be considered sudden) flood of new wave bands coming out of the punk scene and it's been a little overwhelming. It's been hard to really pin-point what is what, and who is who, and why we should like or respect any of it at all. Whereas other bands playing similar music seem

flirt". Totally white-boy god-awful high school punk rock. I am so afraid of what will happen when these guys start playing "emo". I give it a month. (RE)

No Address

THE DOWN-N-OUTS - SUBTERRANEAN BEAT PUNK BLUES, CD

See review above.

Down-N-Outs, PO Box 19946, Denver, CO 80219

DROPOUTS - NOBODY LIKES YOU, CD

Standard post, the actual era, pop punk. Song titles include "Dumped On Prom Night" and "Psycho Girl", with some surf instrumental tossed in for good measure. I really enjoyed the atypical extended funk/jam instrumental hidden track. (AS)

8607 Round Bank Court, Houston, TX 77064

THE DRUNKS - RUIN IT FOR EVERYONE, CD

The band is called The Drunks and they are from the East Coast. You have to be an idiot if you can't guess how this disc sounds. Fun. (BC)

TKO RECODS 4104 24th ST. #103, San Francisco, CA. 94114

ENDANGERED FECES/THE LOITERERS - SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS, SPLIT 7"

Endangered Feces has a great name, but they seem to have too many joke songs to tell what they're really

going for. They could probably sound like a Fat band with a bigger budget. The Loiterers are another snotty punk band with annoying vocals. (NS)

P.O. Box 821, Valley Stream, NY 11582

FACE VALUE - THERE'S ALWAYS THE RADIO, CD

Corny, overly-positive California style Christian punk. The songs are all about God or girls. These youngsters are too serious and positive for me. Oh well, I suppose there's always the radio. (BJM)

Bettie Rocket Records, 3912 Portola Drive, #207, Santa Cruz CA 95062

FALSIES, THE - THEORY + MOTION, CD

See review above.

Middle Man/Emogeddon Records, <http://www.headcold.net/uki/emogeddon>

FERDA/BOBINA - SPLIT, 7"

This is cool a split 7" with 2 Killer Straight-Edge bands from the Czech Republic. The two bands sound very similar in a manner that brings to mind latter day Battle Of Disarm and Profax (which is unusual for SE) The production sucks but the passion and enthusiasm comes through loud and clear. This is recommended for something different to add to your Straight Edge collections. (MY)

Hopewell Records, Ondrej Benes, U hraze 1, Praha 10, 100 00, Czech Republic

FLUF - I KNOW I'M NOBODY, CD

Why anyone would advertise their CD as a six-song single, then proceed to put TWENTY-ONE tracks on it is beyond me. 21 songs of fast alternative rock, somehow (although I can't figure out why) endorsed by both Fat Mike and Giant / Andre the Giant / Sheperd Fairey industries. (RE)

Cold Steel Facts Records, No Address

FOREIGN LEGION - PUNK ROCK JUKE BOX, 7"

I guess these guys are old school. As in, they started playing around 1982, broke up in 1991, and nearly a decade later, are back together. They still play '80s style punk, which is pretty cool, and this is their first release since they've gotten back together. (ES)

DSS Records P.O. Box 739 4021 Linz- AUSTRIA

FOREVER AND A DAY - THE ART OF CREATION, CD

Somebody, either the band or the record label obviously thought that the guys in this band, most notably the lead singer, were incredibly sexy in a moody boy band hunk kind of way that appeals to 13 year old girls. Thus the entire album is plastered with brooding MTV pinup photos of these baby faced young lads staring into the camera with a dark restrained intensity, clad in tight black t-shirts and with varying stages of

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC)

Let me be the first reviewer to spotlight a comedy record. (What an innovator I am!) A disc that EVERYONE should listen to. A disc put out to make us think as much as makes us laugh. The disc being by the late great Bill Hicks, who died of cancer at the age of 32 in 1994 called "Rant In E-Minor." Actually any of the four Bill Hicks comedy records would be a great listen, but for some reason this one seems to be the best. Bill Hicks was a young comedian from Austin, Texas that told stories that would range from sexy stuff to political humor. Bill was probably the most punk rock comedian that ever lived. His anti-establishment-fuck the government views are better than most of the so-called punk bands that are on the air waves today. He loves to poke fun at hillbillies, stupid people, and religion. Bill warned us to wake up and see what is going on around us, and only a few heard his voice. I guarantee you will laugh no matter how old or jaded you are. From topics like dick jokes, COPS, Children, WACO, to the Pope, Bill will win you over. Get this disc now and laugh you little uptight rocker.

Top Five c.d.'s near my disc player: Hanson Brothers- Sudden Death; Sludgeworth- Losers of The Year; Oblivion- Sweatpants U.S.A.; Urge Overkill- Saturation; Smarty Pants- e=mc hammer.

to do it in a much darker manner (The Faint, for example) Janapic seems to go about it in a much more positive, power-pop/surf way. Janapic incorporates keyboards with clean guitar hooks and dual male/female vocals. Tex, the male vocals, seems to be going for a DEVO-esque sound but his vocals don't ever come across dynamic enough and it's the female vocalist, Margeaux, that really carries the band. The production of the whole album, however, is the downfall. It feels light-weight and doesn't carry itself well. The whole album, or the whole band could possibly improve their sound by making everything sound heavier and more intense. The whole album follows their formula for the Janapic rock-sound until the last track, and maybe my favorite, *Hawk Watching*. It starts off with the female vocalist singing by herself which is followed by a buildup of bass and keyboard over a quiet drum beat (which, I feel could have been carried at least three more minutes or so, it's pretty seducing) until the end when Margeaux comes back in and finishes the song. It's a nice touch to end the album. (RE)

JIM CARROLL - RUNAWAY, CDEP

Jim Carroll, poet, songwriter and author of one of my favorite books, *The Basketball Diaries*, returns with a good five song EP. There are two studio tracks which are both organ filled and hauntingly performed with just a dash of his early eighties power pop persona. Even though I found it

odd that someone known for his writing would choose a cover, "Runaway" is a nice slowed down version of Del Shannon classic. The other three tracks are great sounding live recordings from 1999 and feature two tracks from his 1980 Catholic Boy album, and no, it's not a romp through his hit "People Who Died". Musically, these live tracks stay true to that good eighties power pop sound. Lyrically, he reminds me a little bit of Bob Dylan, as I guess that any poet turned songwriter might, but his vocal style is just a little less convincing. Overall this is quite fresh sounding, as the backing musicians are from some very diverse bands (Truly, Screaming Trees, Soundgarden, Fastbacks), and doesn't sound at all like it was tossed together in a lame attempt to extort drug money from fans. (AS)

THE KILLING FLAME - ANOTHER BREATH, CD

Truth be told, I generally have this rule about not taking bands that have a song about/with their band name in it too seriously. There are a few exceptions, of course, like that one Le Shok song where they were real clever about it and you hardly notice unless you're really paying attention, or that one MDC song... But I generally only tolerate that from bands I already like to begin with. Even so, this five piece from play some decent hardcore, without all that bravado and machismo most HD bands try to bombard you with these days. (ES)

facial hair growth and highlights. This says nothing of the music, which is abound with crunching guitars and tortured vocals such as "How long has it taken me, I want to wash these memories off my bitter hands" and "You said you needed room to breathe/breathe/breathe/ you are breathing toxic air." Bleargh! (JK)

Eulogy Records, PO box 33075 USA

FRIGATE - BLOW ME DOWN, CD

Mid-tempo melodic rock with the vocal duties split between a male and a female. Think X with harmonies that aren't as good and music that isn't as interesting. Some songs are punk numbers; "No Self Control" sounds like Bad Religion. Squeaky-clean production. (BJM)

Spinning Records, 398 Congress Street, studio 3, Boston MA 02210

GAZA STRIPPERS - 1000 WATT CONFESSIONS, CD

It is inevitable that any band that Rick Sims is in will get compared to the Didjits. This is good as the average Didjits song. Unfortunately, this is no Didjits. That said, this is one heavy rocks and roller indeed. (EA)

Lookout Records

THE GITS - SEAFISH LOUISVILLE, CD

See review above.

Broken Records PO Box 460402 SF, CA 94146

THE GOOD LIFE - NOVENA ON A NOCTURN, CD

Slow, vocal-based songs featuring a variety of instruments. It looks like it's one guy's project and he has a bunch of people play on the songs to record them. Pretty good melodies, though the whole thing does sound affected at times. (BJM)

Better Looking Records, 11041 Santa Monica Blvd., PMB 302, Los Angeles CA 90025

HEADCOATS - ELEMENTARY HEADCOATS, 2XCD OR 3XLP

See review above.

Damaged Goods PO Box 671, London E17 6NF

THE HEX - NO CAR, CDEP

Trite, Self indulgent crap that young girls sit down and clap to when they play live. Experimental rock operaish stuff that really tries to be passionate. (MY)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 willow Street, Bayonne NJ, 07002

HITCH - NEW UNTITLED 3 SONG 7 INCH, 7"

Three interesting metal-influenced pop songs from Belgium. Bassy and recommended. (AE)

Delboy Records, PO Box 75, 9000 Gent 12, BELGIUM

HOBART - DOMINO THEORY, 7"

Two songs here, both of the emo-punk variety, like *Saves the Day* or some such band. Decent music; cool packaging. (BJM)

Sumo Agnew Records, 1008 N. Queen, Tucson AZ 85705

THE HOPE CONSPIRACY - COLDBLUE, CD

See review above.

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534

THE HOSTAGES - GREBO 2000 EP, 7"

In the name of all that's holy in the trinity of rock, this is just alright, if that. These guys try to rock out with their cocks out but can't reach the urinals yet (even though the harmonica was a nice touch). Maybe they're better live... (DM)

Hostage Headquarters PO Box 3383 Mpls, MN 55403

HOT WATER MUSIC - NEVER ENDER, 2XCD OR 2XLP

See review above.

No Idea PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604

HOVLAND - ST, 7"

Indie rock with some Sonic Youth influence. The 2 songs are semi quiet, never quite paying off with any loud rocking parts. It's a little too monotonous for me, but it's played well, and I guess there are people

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Manning (BJM)

I don't know how many people consider 1990 a great year for "classic" punk, but it was only eleven years ago that Fugazi released *Repeater*. With this record, Fugazi pushed the meaning and sound of punk like no band before them and few since. Before Nirvana and the re-acceptance of rock by mainstream music, Fugazi was kicking doors open for hundreds of underground bands simply by making their own music by their own rules, which they had been doing all along. Many consider Fugazi "post-punk," or "post-hardcore," or some other subdivision, but in truth, they were one of the first bands to challenge such definitions by playing music that fit no predetermined sound or category. Having said that, we will look at *Repeater*, which I think is punk as fuck. There seems to be a pattern in their songs, and it's a formula that works so well for them. Joe and Brendan lay a tight foundation on bass and drums, and the guitar parts play off one another on top of it. Guy and Ian alternate singing songs, as they often do, and from "Turnover" and "Repeater," to "Blueprint" and "Merchandise," to "Sieve-Fisted Find" and "Styrofoam," every song has a sense of urgency and an intense energy that you don't usually see (especially when it runs throughout an entire record). The alternating vocalists keep the listener's attention and broaden the band's sound. Even "Shut the Door," the slower number that ends the record, has an amazing intensity that is amplified even further in their live shows. Fugazi established their own sound, which many bands have tried unsuccessfully to rip off in one way or another. *Repeater* is "classic" and essential enough for me to put it high on the old list of favorite records of all time.

Stuff I have been listening to lately includes Leadbelly, Otis Redding, and the first Swingin' Utters record.

LADDERBACK/MARION — SPLIT, 7"

This is a really solid, split release between two bands playing different styles of emotional hardcore. Marion plays up the emo tip a little more than Ladderback, with semi-pretty spastic guitar breakdowns followed by fast, blasting attacks of screaming/singing. They remind me a little like Maximilian Colby. Their lyric sheet, however, totally kicks the ass of Ladderback's because it is reader friendly. Now, you little Ladderback graphic designers, don't get your indie undies in a wad, you're lyric sheet is pretty to look at, and very "cool", but I keep turning it the wrong way, and can't read the lyrics with the wacky script you chose. However, in the battle of the most rocking-est bands, I'm going to have to go with the Ladderback rock group because they write more powerful songs. Fast, emotional-hardcore, that reminds me a little of The Exploder in their more chaotic moments (not the Rites of Spring moments at all though). I'm not down with the fade-out on the first song though. Fucking fade-outs on the end of songs are for chumps. Top-notch first release for Backdoor Records. PS. Stop gluing the record-sleeve and insert to your cover, I know it's a nice touch but it comes as way annoying. (RE)

LAGWAGON — LET'S TALK ABOUT LEFTOVERS, CD

What more can Lagwagon do? A live album is too predictable, so why not put together a collection of the dregs and unreleased stuff? Sounds like a

winner. This is a collection of 25 songs that are generally missing from the last ten years of Lagwagon's career. There are some brand new spankin' songs tunes starting album then the go all the way to the beginning of their career at the end of the CD (pretty sneaky) including comp songs, outtakes, demos, and those just missing songs. Some of the highlights include their Jawbreaker, Devo and Scorpions covers, and some of their original stuff is kinda cool, too. I really don't like these guys but this is a pretty good collection considering. 25 songs of punk and their early "hardcore" days, guitar solos included... (DM)

THE MIGRATION TRAP — SONGS FROM NUMBER FIFTEEN, CD

I'm surprised how much I like this hardcore EP, but it's got a unique rhythm and pacing to it that works wonders. The drums are the loudest item in the mix, which is not something you hear every day. Musically, this isn't really hardcore, and has more in common with Jawbreaker. But the garbled, "I have food in my mouth as I sing" vocals are typical new school hardcore vocals. "It Could Go Either Way," is the name of one of the songs, and that's the fine line this walks. Just when it gets a bit annoying, it slides into gear and picks up with enough jagged edges and tricky rhythm to bring itself back up. There was some serious shit in this

who love Sonic Youth. (NS)

Hope Records, P.O. Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

I FARM — SINCERELY, ROBOTS, CD

Musically, I think I Farm are really good. Lots of changes and variety. Lyrically, it's a mix of sarcastic humor and politics. Fast, fun punk with metal guitar parts and loads of charisma? Yes, please. (ES)

Cool Guy Records P.O. Box 2361 S.F.S., CA 90670

IDYLL SWORDS — II, CD

The thirteen songs on this record are mostly instrumental and are based in a wide variety of acoustic string instruments. There is not much percussion, and the music sounds Indian at times (they employ a sitar, among other things). The vocals are not terribly exciting; I prefer the instrumental sections to those with vocals. With my limited, rock-based music vocabulary, I will say that some of it reminds me of the instrumentals that Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin would play (think "Black Mountain Side," but with more involved orchestration). Definitely a pleasant change from the usual. (BJM)

The Communion Label, 2745 16th St., the di Christina Bldg., San Francisco CA 94110

THE INFLUENTS — CHECK PLEASE, CD

I think I had to check this CD twice to make sure it wasn't Billie Joe singing. This is sort of like a soft maybe dare I say country-like version of Green Day. Real refreshing after listening to a lot of hard punk today. (EA)

Adeline Records 5337 College Ave #318 Oakland, CA 94618

INTELLIGIBLES — WHY I WRITE SUCH GOOD BOOKS, CD

Mellow one-man acoustic stuff here. 17 songs, nothing new, but not offensive to the ears at all. It comes in a plastic envelope and a photocopied cover to give it that whole home-made feel. It smells good too, the envelope I mean. That plastic smell. Can't describe it, you just have to love it. Kinda like gasoline. It'd addictive. (RE)

Rent to Own Records, 2332 W. Grand, Chicago, IL 60612

JANIS FIGURE-DAMAGE CONTROL, CD

These guys have got that Rocket FTC & side projects (Hot Snakes) sound but without the horns. But you know what, they don't do it half as good. Good production though... (DM)

Own & Operated Recordings, PO Box 36 Fort Collins, CO 80522

J JAPANESE — THE SOCIAL DISEASE, CD

See review above.

Plethorazine Records, 6775 Bingle Rd, Houston, TX 77092

JELLO BIAFRA — THE GREEN WEDGE, 7"

This is basically Jello speaking about the merits of the Green Party's platform. I like Jello and the Green Party, but this 7" won't serve much use now, other than to make some dope Jello remixes. Chika chika! (NS)

Alternative Tentacles, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

JIM CARROLL — RUNAWAY, CDEP

See review above.

Kill Rock Stars, PMB 418, 120 NE State, Olympia, WA 98501

JOHN SCHOOLEY AND HIS ONE MAN BAND — S/T

What can you say about a one man band? Maybe that he could have been your stoner friend in high school, taping his new "hit" song by himself on his boombox. (EA)

Ball Records PO Box 1152, Gardiner, ME 04345

THE JULIANA THEORY — EMOTION IS DEAD, CD

Pretextuous alternative radio-rock, hoping to trick all the emo kids into loving them. Very diverse album, ranging from Creed-like ballad crooning to Refused-

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA)

Oh! Do I have a treat for you. I know that this won't be a groundbreaking "classic" album to recommend as I suspect many readers own this. In 1977 The Vibrators released their first LP "Pure Mania" it is a timeless work of art. I won't stop at just this LP though, I think you need their "Whips and Furs" single and their second LP "V2" as well. The classic "Pure Mania" starts with the ripping "Into the Future" and blasts through the short "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah" which has been covered countless times, remarkably well by Teengenerate. It just keeps going with countless greats such as "Sweet Sweet Heart", "Baby Baby", "Whips and Furs" and "Wrecked on You." This LP is without a doubt one of the more underrated releases in the punk explosion of 1977. I sure hope you own this. Now onto more uncharted territories. First their single for "Whips and Furs" and most notably the B-side "We Vibrate". Even though their LPs have been re-released for CD, somehow this song doesn't ever end up as a bonus track. If anyone has seen it let me know. I fortunately have a 7" version and it could be their best song. Finally, few have the Vibrators second LP, "V2." This record isn't as straight up 1977 punk (released a year later), but gets a little more creative. The title track is a re-visit of the first record with a song called "Pure Mania" which isn't on the LP of the same name. Then goes onto one of their best singles "Automatic Lover." Though the rest of the LP, particular the B-Side isn't quite as good as the first 2-3 songs it still is a gem worth finding. Way too many of you only own the Vibrators first record after Boris the Sprinkler covered them. You should try to hunt down any of their singles and "V2" If any one has the "Pogo Dancing" single please contact me at reviews@punkplanet.com , you will make my year for even copy. (EA)

singer's mouth as he did the vocals! Like maybe the band had just taken a quick lunch break and he still had a pile of fast food to consume as he overdubbed 'em. The Migration Trap is like its name: you're moved from one pace to another till you feel trapped and want out. Almost a perfect technique, but not quite. Still, a hearty recommendation goes out for this one. (AE)

MILLOY - AUTODRIVEL, CD

There's some things I just don't get about punk rockers. One thing I don't get is why everyone voted for Nader, but no one voted for my guy (Socialist Party USA candidate David McReynolds). I also can't understand why it's considered definitively un-punk to wear a watch. And another thing I don't get is why everyone likes the band Leatherface. I've seen Leatherface play and have heard their records, and they suck either way. Now, here's a real mystery: why do I love this Milloy album, even though it's a carbon copy of Leatherface? I have no answers to any of the above, but this Milloy band is just the coolest pop band to come

from the UK in a damn long time. Maybe it's the slight gruffness of the sensitive vocalist that I like (he sounds like a skinhead trying to sing sweet pop), or maybe it's just the tightness of the songwriting. This is a 24 min. album that feels like it's been polished to the fraction of a second. And I'm not talking smooth production, but rather the sort of incisive and pointed songwriting with a focus that's usually too much for so called punks to muster. (AE)

NUZZLE - JUNK OF MYTH '92-'95, CD

Just so you know this is not a discography CD, these are the early and out of print years of Nuzzle (first LP, a couple of 7"ers, and some unreleased material). This Bay Area band (who are still together, just a reminder) plays music that revolves around the sounds of punk, indie rock and that emo thing while still being somewhat innovative. At most times, Nuzzle plays a darker feeling kind of music with that feeling of the light is trying to break on through. Kind of noisy and gangly but still play with a solid song structure. If it seems like I'm being somewhat contradicting in my review,

like screaming and lots of bad keyboards and attempts at electronic music, black trench coats and slicked back hair. This band will probably be huge, and that makes me so, so sad. (RE)

Tooth and Nail Records, PO BOX 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

JUMPIN' BEANS AND WILLIE - S/T, 7"

I want this single in every jukebox in America. It is so stupid that I guarantee that it would get the quarters dropped in that slot. Both songs have simple 2 chord songs on an acoustic guitar with a box being hit for a drum. Side-A is about a milkshake and Side-B is about popcorn. Both songs have less words than this review (EA)

Ball Records PO Box 1152, Gardiner, ME 04345

JUNCTION 18 - THIS VICIOUS CYCLE, CD

If I knew a 13 year old who was brand new to "Punk" and loved MxPx, Blink 182, and the like I would let them have this stupid CD.(MY)

Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest Street #545, Westminster CA, 92683

JUNGLE - LONG TIME NO SEE, CD

Melodic, rather poppy rock and roll with a sense of humor. Fun, honest rock music made by some pretty funky lookin dudes. Worth checking out. (JK)

Scratch Records, 726 Richards Street Vancouver, BC V6B 3A4

KERMIT'S FINGER/ZIPPO RAID - THEY'LL PLAY ANYWHERE, SPLIT 7"

Both bands play garagey punk with semi gruff vocals and an overall Oi feel, but with more charm and humor than the usual bootboy variety. (AS)

Fan Attic Records, P.O. Box 391494, Cambridge, MA 02139

KICKED IN THE HEAD - THICK AS THIEVES, CD

Kind of reminds me of the Offspring, but more metal, and less stupid. A nice mix of rock/metal that the kids are real into these days. Good guitars, nice voice. I bet they put on a pretty decent live show. (ES)

Kickedintheheadquarters 202 Whitwell Street Quincy, MA 02169

THE KILLING FLAME - ANOTHER BREATH, CD

See review above.

Equal Vision Records P.O. Box 14 Hudson, NY 12534

KIND OF LIKE SPITTING - \$100 ROOM, CD

Rocking male and female vocals (including from a chick from Sarge), uncommonly short songs for light indie pop, and a Billy Bragg cover highlight this good release. (AE)

Ganaarecordings, PO Box 671072, Coral Springs, FL 33067

KING RAT - BIG PLANS, CD

Hailing from Denver is King Rat who play upbeat punk ala skate rock with a sense of humor. Besides the cheesy (cheesy, rat, get it?) tattoo flash cover of a naked girl and dynamite, this rocks pretty hard. Fun stuff that could end up on Fat Wreck Chords. (DM)

King Rat, 1159 Logan #1 Denver, CO 80203

KINGS OF NUTHIN' - GET BUSY LIVIN' OR GET BUSY DYIN', CD

Seven piece rockabilly band with slicked back hair and suits that fall somewhere between the Stray Cats and the Brian Setzer Orchestra with vocals that sound like that dude from the Bosstones. (AS)

Reckloose Records, 26 Wisteria St., Salem, MA 01970

LADDERBACK / MARION - SPLIT, 7"

See review above.

Backdoor Records, PO BOX 802, Greenville, NC 27835-0802

LAGWAGON- LET'S TALK ABOUT LEFTOVERS, CD

See review above.

My Records, PO Box 41730 Santa Barbara, CA 93140 USA

LAMONT- POPULATION 3, CD

Boobs, Skulls, Flames and two more boobs make up the feel of the disc.. 3 males playing cool rock like the way it should be. These guys aren't the best playing this balls out style, but they give it a decent effort. (BC)

Curve of the Earth Records 1312 Boylston St. Boston, MA. 02115

LARRY DIRTY - S/T, 7"

Larry of Dirty's fame throws together three songs similar to the Oblivians in style. Unfortunately, I will have to say that this lacks the vision and soul of said band. (EA)

Flying Bomb PO Box 971038, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

LE SHOK - DNA, 7"

Crazy world. This re-release? Could be one of the best bands around right now. The new wave sound of

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Erin Schleckman (ES)

Every Wednesday night this goth bar in town has "80s New Wave" night, so my friends and I meet up there to dance the night away like we're at a Molly Ringwald's high school dance. It's good friends, good times, and most of all, good music. They play classics like the Buggles, Billy Idol, Iggy Pop, Flock of Seagulls, New Order, and the Clash. My friends and I have this ongoing discussion about which Clash record is the best. My friend Zak says "Combat Rock" has all the hits, like "Rock the Casbah" and "Should I Stay or Should I Go," and while I like that one a lot too, the consensus amongst my little group is that the self-titled is the best, even though most people seem to go for "London Calling". The self-titled has rad songs like "Garageland" and "White Riot". Definitely go for the American version as opposed to the UK version, since the first one has more tracks.

Lately I've been real into... Bright Eyes - Letting off the Happiness, Smoking Popes - Born to Quit, Ink and Dagger - s/t, a mix cd my friend Kim made me, Pixies - Surfer Rosa.

it is what the music is saying to me. Quiet to loud, soft to hard, beauty to chaos. BUT, it is done quite well and more importantly it rocks. As the CD continues, the songs keep getting better (Except for the last three out of 20 songs, unreleased bedroom tracks. Enough said...) This is so worth checking out. (DM)

THE PARTY OF HELICOPTERS - MT. FOREVER, CD

Once I was real drunk at this place called Speak In Tongues, a local DIY venue here in Cleveland, and the POH were playing. I remember this crazy kid threatening to beat me up for saying they were shitty. It went sort of like this... Me: What's up, shitty band? Him- Finish your beer. Me: Why? Him: So I can drag your butt outside and beat the crap out of you for saying that. Me: Why do I have to finish my beer first? Him: Because if you don't, I'll have to kick your butt for wasting beer too. This is how it works in Cleveland. For the record, I still don't understand the hype around these guys, but if you dig lots of guitars and lots of spacey-whiny weird vocals, dig this. (ES)

PETROGAD - A.B.C., CD

This is a European (German?) political punk band that is more than just writing songs with an agenda. They write great songs that are catchy and just well done. They play a style of music that's not very typical of punk these

days. It's punk but not pop, dirt, HC or anything like that. They don't really sound like Sunshine but have certain similarities. Very non-traditional but has a very distinct sound. It's clean, upbeat, energetic, has male and some female vocals, poetic in nature and quite refreshing. Did I mention this was a benefit CD for the Anarchist Black Cross (A.B.C.), which supports the struggles of prisoners especially those of political situations and prisoners of war. Not only do you get info on the organization, but you also get info on how to help out, never mind the great layout for the lyrics after all the useful info. Recommended. (DM)

SCARED OF CHAKA - SEVEN STORIES TALL, CD

This is a collection of seven inch, live and comp tracks from '94-'99 that showcase Scared Of Chaka's rise from DIY obscurity to scene respect. These guys built a following the hard way, constant touring and super energetic live shows. Musically, they pack a catchy pop punk punch, but where others fall into sappy over produced gimmickry, they cross it with unbridled energy and a good dose of Teenegenerate style lofi hell noise. They have the ability to pay respects to various styles of punk rock without being snared in the trap like other pathetic copyists. Now if I could only understand the words, and hey, where are my favorites, "Questionable Meat" and "Tion" (everybody seems to leave a few tracks to the collector

the Le Shok may have started to run its course, but if you missed this single it is a must have. (EA)

Tiger Suit Records PO Box 15482, Long Beach, CA 90815

LITTLE BY LITTLE - S/T, 7"

Little by Little play mid-tempo hardcore, not too emotional and not really all that good. It's got a little bit of a D.C. feel to it, and the singer's vocals are really flat. That's all. (RE)

Primary Thought Records, PO Box 4995, Portland, OR 97208-4995

THE LOUDMOUTHS/ROCKS - SPLIT, 7"

The Loudmouths are one of the best trashy rock 'n' roll drunk outfits of the last ten years and the Rocks are from yesteryears. These two bands combine for one killer single that shows that great punk rock doesn't die and doesn't need to re-invent itself. (EA)

702 Records PO Box 204 Reno, NV 89504

LUKE DUKE - I WAS A TEENAGE HITCHHIKER, CD

Highly produced, radio friendly pop music that has more in common hard rock wise with Matchbox 20 than let's say even Blink 182. I just don't get it. (AS)

83 N. Henry Street 3R, Brooklyn, NY 11222

THE MANDARINS - SHIVER, CDEP

Coffee-house brand indie rock, with sweet girl vocals. They self-released it so they must like it a lot. (RE)

PO Box 14, RPO Corydon, Winnipeg, MB R3M Canada

THE MEMBERS OF TINNITUS - 28-33, 7"

Out there electronica with minor punk and rock

influences and occasional shouted vocals over the instrumentals. (AE)

Promenade Fanzine Recordings c/o Fredrik Kullman, Osterlanggatan 65 St., 50337, Borås

THE MIGRATION TRAP - SONGS FROM NUMBER FIFTEEN, CD

See review above.

Random Noise Records, no address

MILLOY - AUTODRIVEL, CD

See review above.

Crackle! Records, PO Box 7, Otley, LS21 1YB, ENGLAND

MOONEEN - SMALLER CHAIRS FOR THE EARLY 1900S, CD

Middle-of-the-road emo/indie/punk a la Jawbreaker one of the bands who try to sound like them. Four songs, mostly about girls, or the more general "love." (BJM)

Smallman Records, PO Box 352, RPO Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 3V3

MY BRAIN - THE MY BRAIN, CD

Fuck, Fuck FUCK! Picture super wimpy naked boys pretending to be gay stereotypes with Casio toy keyboard sets. This sucks shit. No Punk Rocker should be subjected to this. (MY)

Audiopants, 576 Middlebury, Rochester Hills, MI 48309

MY WINTER JANE / SHONBEN, SPLIT 7"

My Winter Jane are from Japan and play a mix of emo and punk. They don't sound like your standard emo band, though, because they have a female singer.

Shonben are from England. Their first song is straight up pop-rock; the second is a punk song. (BJM)

NAVEL/THE T.V. DINNERS - SPLIT, 7"

I could do without T.V. Dinners, but Navel is the best! Both are Japanese bands playing fast poppy punk with a sense of humor. (AE)

Snuffy Smile, 4-1-16-201 Daita, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 155-0033, JAPAN

NEVERTHELESS - THROUGH THE NIGHT, CD

Suburban Florida skate punk made by guys in baggy jeans and baseball caps. (JK)

Rock. 2000 Boot to Head Records: POB 9005; Pdx, OR, 97207 USA

NG KINDHEIT - DEAF LIKE ME, 7"

I get it, he's deaf and so he can't hear what he's singing. That's why it sounds so bad! Genius! The music on the A-side features a sludgy bass over a lurching beat, with a clean guitar playing weird stuff on top. The vocals are a bunch of nonsense. The B-side sounds more improvised and isn't much better. (BJM)

Sound Org, 1843 W. Evergreen #2, Chicago IL 60622

NUZZLE - JUNK OF MYTH '92-'95, CD

See review above.

Zum PO Box 4449 Berkeley, CA 94704

OHNO EXPRESS/soon - SPLIT, CD

Soon features members of the Japanese band Blew and play pop-punk along the lines of Jawbreaker. Raw and

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Josh Kermiet (JK)

I know, the Bad Brains aren't exactly underappreciated, but something tells me that a lot of people involved in punk right now could stand to listen to this album again and learn a thing or two. I first heard the Bad Brains in 9th grade, when I bought "The Quikness". One of their later, major label releases, "The Quikness" was pretty fucking horrible, representing a pale ghost of the awesome power that was once the Bad Brains. It wasn't until I picked up this CD, a re-release of their first, self-titled cassette, that I truly felt the awesome power that was the Bad Brains. Containing such classic tracks as "Sailin' On", "Attitude" and "Pay to Come", I would agree with Adam Yauch's cover statement that this is possibly one of the best hardcore/punk albums ever recorded. A potent mixture of Punk and Reggae, the Bad Brains broke all conventions, managing to be both threatening and positive at the same time, which is no easy task. Simply put, if you don't have this album, get it, and if you do, then listen to it again.

Current Picks and such: Mark Mothersbaugh's postcard art, Laika and the Cosmonauts, Old time Religun, "the Sims" computer game (damn addictive!), Vic Ruggiero's solo album

scum nowadays). Ah hell, I'll just turn it up and feel the fun as it shines through on almost every cut! (AS)

SHOTMAKER - THE COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY, 2XCD

Shotmaker are one hard emo band of yesteryear. They were one of the early bands to get the start/stop and slow screamy parts that made emo great and eventually killed it in my opinion. I really loved their first LP, "Mouse Ear Forget-me-not" and the split with Max Colby. The first disc includes both of these releases plus the comp tracks from HeartattaCk and Old Glory. The second disc contains their second full length and a whole handful of singles, 3 unreleased songs and three tracks taken from a demo. I have heard a lot of grumblings about the sound of this discography. Only the first LP was taken from masters while the rest was taken from clean vinyl versions you may already own. I wouldn't let the sound keep you away from this unless you already own all the material. Shotmaker sound fresh today to me, even after not listening to much emo for quite some time. This is an essential disc set for sure. (EA)

THE VOIDS / NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH, SPLIT 7"

The Voids are a female fronted dirt punk band that back one side of this 7" with five songs of spite and some great imagery of a crappy world they live in. For a dirt punk band these guys (and gal) have more melody than snottiness which is a welcomed turn of events. The Voids have a classic punk sound on this record which makes it a good listen. Narcoleptic Youth also compliment this piece of wax with their witty bantering of the reality of the in crowd punk scene and people who follow. They seem to be influenced by the Dead Kennedys without really taking on the exact sound. NY seem to steal this split even if only three songs are brought to the table. This is a great 7" that I'm sure a lot of kids will miss out on so don't miss out. (DM)

WESLEY WILLIS, RUSH HOUR CD

What can be said of Wesley Willis that hasn't already been said. For many years now this once homeless, schizophrenic, head butting Casio dynamo has been writing some of the weirdest most fucked up, hilarious and strangely hypnotic music to come along since the Shaggs. All of Wesley's songs follow exactly the same formula: Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Casio Solo, Verse, Chorus, "Rock over London, rock over

pretty good, although nothing special. Ohno Express play a much mellower punk rock. (RE)
Crackle Records, PO Box 7, Otley, LS21 1YB, England

OLNEYVILLE SOUND SYSTEM - ON SAFARI, CD

The Mentors meet avant-garde noisiness in this strange band with just bass, drums, and distorted vocals. Very fucked-up band from Providence. (AE)
Heparin, PO Box 29447, Providence, RI 02909

THE PAC-MEN - READY, 7"

When I was a kid we had a local band who never released anything: Leviticus. They were characterized by a drummer who knew one beat, a singer who shouted in one tone and stolen riffs. This band was super fun to watch and slam dance to since they were the sheer embodiment of teen angst Punk as fuck Rock. The Pac Men carry the same torch. Limited to 500!! (MY)
Red Tape Records, POB 4468, Danbury CT, 06813-4468

PANKRATION - OF MONKEY OF MAN OF WIZARD, CD

Wow. I was expecting this to be Emo but instead I got really bad Metal. Almost bad enough to be cool, but not quite. (JK)
Donut Records (no address listed)

PANTY RAID - THE SECRET'S OUT!, 7"

Easily fits in your collection between your early Donnas, Bratmobile and Tourettes records. The cover (and drumming) done by the fabulous Janelle. Six

simple sloppy silly songs (say that ten times fast). (EA)
Raw Sugar PO Box 53011, New Orleans, LA 70153

THE PARTY OF HELICOPTERS - MT. FOREVER, CD

Once I was real drunk when this band played See review above.
Troubleman Unlimited 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ 07002

PEAR OF THE WEST/SERVO - SPLIT, 7"

POTW features female sing songy vocals over speeded up bubble gum pop. Surprise surprise Servo sounds like the exact same band only on 33 instead of 45. (MY)
SnuffySmile: 4-1-16-201, Daita, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 155-0033, Japan

THE PEEPS - S/T, CD

The Peeps take everything that was great about Nikki and the Corvettes and play it a little harder. Tracks like "Give it Up", "Our Boys", and "He's so Fine" probably say it all. (EA)
Sympathy for the Record Industry

PERPETROGRAD - A.B.C., CD

See review above.
Paranoia Recordings PO Box 70 1013 Vienna / Austria

THE PICTS - F.O.P., 7"

The gods have answered my calling for lovely colored vinyl. This limited edition release from Pezhead Records is on blue, hand numbered, and is fabulous. The Picts know what DIY is, they seem to love and

believe in what they do, and I think that's great. Five tracks of political punk rock that doesn't get old. (ES)
Super Pezhead Records P.O. Box 588 Friendswood, TX 77549
www.spr.4mg.com

THE PINKOS - TO MY VALENTINE, 7"

Take Vanessa from the band Bell and Steve from the Gits and you get a great two piece. This is a great single that I am excited about even after listening two it for two weeks. Great pop-sensibility in this one. Each of the four songs sound different making this one fun single. (EA)
Empty Records PO Box 12034, Seattle, WA 98102

POISON ARROWS - S/T, CD

I guess this is emo stuff. Seems lighter and less angst ridden than emo though. (BC)
Sound on Sound P.O. Box 687 Berkeley, CA. 94704-0687

QUAGMIRE - THE SENATOR, CDEP

Mid-tempo Swedish post-punk music that has a real math rock sound to it. Strange time signatures and rhythms and apathetic-sounding vocals. (BJM)
Carcrash Records, PO Box 39, 462 21 Vanersborg, Sweden

RED PLANET - REVOLUTION 33, CD

New wave / pop record that stands out in this day and age. Not a barn buster or anything, but about as alternative as my tastes get. The synths add a lot to this release. (EA)
Gearhead Records PO Box 421219 San Francisco, CA 94142-1219

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Mr)Dana Morse (DM)

A strong feeling of mine has always been to be a good band, one should feel strongly about the music that another is playing. Whether it's love or hate a strong emotion is present. Shudder To Think has always been able to get this strong feeling across to their listeners. You either love or hate their sound. The two albums I'm want to reference is the Voodoo, Curses, Spells and Mooses and the still in print Ten Spot on Dischord. Their sound was high energy and beautiful in their own way. Kind of rock with a feminine Ozzy on vocals that captured poetry in motion. Bizarre lyrics with punk-lite music that still kicked ass. This was an awesome release in a world of new school HC, pre indie rock DC bands, skate rock and new wave music. Quite the stand out band. Love 'em or hate 'em.

I like records...: Daltonic on Phyte Rec., the Bomb, Mice Parade, the new Shape Shifters, cLOUDDEAD and GN'R (the shame of it all...)

Chicago!" Product Endorsement ("Pontiac, we build excitement!).

Perhaps best known for his songs about bands that he has seen or likes, Rush Hour is compiled from Willis's older recordings. Rush Hour covers a much broader spectrum of subject matter, focusing on imagined stories of Drug Dealers and Violent acts involving 2by4's, as well as Wesley classics such as "I whipped Batman's Ass" "The Vulture's ate my dead ass up" and songs about Wesley's own personal struggles to be a better person and to come to terms with his religious faith. On "Good News is Rock and Roll" Wesley Sings, "Jesus is keeping me on the road/ I keep on Moving/ I am cruising to the nearest top." Some may say that Wesley is being exploited by Jello Biafra because he is schizophrenic, and while I understand why people would give these criticisms, it seems unfounded. Wesley's music seems to be form of therapy for him, and to have his music heard and appreciated undoubtedly a big deal to someone who idealizes rock stars so much. On Chronic Schizophrenia, Willis paints a very haunting picture of his disease. He sings, "My mind plays tricks on me every time I say something/it brings evil voices out of my head and talks to me vulgar/ but when I have bad luck I always hear evil voices talking to me vulgar/ Riding the Ck bus all I hear is Vulgarly/ I hear no music at all." Haunting and darkly funny, Willis can be more than joke music. (JK)

X - HOME IS WHERE THE FLOOR IS, 7"

Awhile back I tried to wax poetic about this band's Aspirations album in the classic reviews section, so it was quite a delight to get this in the mail. These four tracks, from 1978, predate that LP by a few months and feature a guitar player that died shortly after these recordings. Three of these appeared in the eighties on the "Why March When You Can Riot" comp and in the nineties on the "Go and Do It" 2 CD collection. This also has an earlier version of "Good On Ya Baby" which was later redone for the LP. While any of these bile spit tracks would be welcome on any of the Killed By Death type comps, they still pale in comparison to the bass driven and guitar stabbed debut LP. So pick this up, because either you already own Aspirations and want this, or you need to get that LP and then realize that you need this too. As always with early Australian punk, this ain't no Sex Pistols/Clash ripoff shit. (AS)

VA - DISARMING VIOLENCE, CD

We used to have a teacher who only had one arm, but he still went hunting with a crossbow. I guess disarming him didn't stop violence! But seriously, this CD isn't great, but it wins by default. Plus it's a benefit CD so that's gotta count for something, right? I'm sure they'll be putting this review on their web page! So, what we have here is a CD benefiting the Pax Organization, which

REDUX/FOR INSTANCE - SPLIT, 7"

For Instance is a pretty basic Punk Rock band putting out their first single it's really tough to tell how they will mature. Strong music with distinctive vocals - shows promise. Redux has a cool eerie tone throughout with Almost Dr. Knowish Vocals (Kyle not Brandon) Redux is very good evil punk/HC which conjures up images of Doug Moody, Mystic Records, Oxnard Circa '83.(MY)

Blitz Slap Records, POB 952, Grover Beach CA, 93483

REST ASSURED? - LAST BRIDGE BURNED, CD

Why does everybody always have to be a tough guy? Growly vocals. Jock-like attitude. Nothin' new. (ES)

Roacho 13 Records P.O. Box 163 Dumont, NJ 07628

THE REVOLUTIONARY HYDRA - THE ANTIPHONY, CD

Self-proclaimed indie rock that sounds like the Parasites on ludes. But who could hate a band with a song called "Co-pilots of the LCD Scene?" (AE)

Elsinor Records, PO Box 5463, Bellingham, WA 98227

THE ROCKING HORSE WINNER - STATE OF FEELING CONCENTRATION, CD

Female singer sings alternative pop rock songs with silly lyrics about what appears to be a very dull and pathetic existence. Nice voice, dull music. (AE)

Ohev, PO Box 772121, Coral Springs, FL 33077

SADHU - THE HARRY TRUMAN BOOTH, CD

8 slow and tame pop songs with a mellow vocalist.

There's an obvious Velvet Underground influence here. Enjoyable and unpretentious. (AE)

Kat Piss Lodge, 6 Welsh St., Frostburg, MD 21532

THE SAINTE CATHERINES - THOSE STARS ARE FOR YOU, CD

Wow, someone crossed Crimpshrine and Hot Water Music and put them in Canada. Actually, this is really good melodic punk with dual vocals a lot of crunchy guitars and popping bass work with some decent production. Very catchy, toe tappen' stuff that's worth checking out. (DM)

Empty Pool Records 1614 St. Christophe Montreal (Quebec) H2L 3W2

9 SCARED OF CHAKA - SEVEN STORIES TALL, CD

See review above.

702 Records, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504

SCARED OF CHAKA/FATAL FLYING GUILLOTEENS - SPLIT, 7"

The SOC side has two pop-garage gems that rank with their best material. The FFG lead track on the B-side, "Stallions", is an instant classic and worth twice that cost of this single. (EA)

Dirtnap Records PO Box 21249 Seattle, WA 98111

SCUM OF THE EARTH - BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, CD

This CD is a collection of this Australian band's songs from an eight year span. The music ranges from straight ahead punk to screaming hardcore to something like grind, and there are two songs that have horns (one has a ska part). (BJM)

Boot to Head Records, PO Box 9005, Portland OR 97207

SEAN NA NA- RETURN OF THE UNICORN, CD

6 songs down the line like a dreamy Smiths record looking at pictures of the late Smoking Popes. This is soothing cool vocals- chilled out stuff, not for anyone with pep. (BC)

Troubleman Unlimited 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ. 07002

THE SHANDON - NICE TRY, CD

Pop punk ska core from Italy. Better than most, but still pretty terrible. (JK)

Edizioni V2 Music Publishing (Italy) S.r.l

SHIPPING NEWS- VERY SOON, AND IN PLEASANT COMPANY., CD

Light rock from Quarterstick Records, who used to put out heavy rock. Lots of low vocals and instrumentation. Maybe the band likes it. (BC)

Quarterstick Records P.O. Box 25342, Chicago, IL. 60625

9 SHOTMAKER - THE COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY, 2XCD

See review above.

Troubleman Unlimited 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NY 07002

SLOE- INEXACT REPLICA, CD

This really rocks in that "emo" (evil, evil word) rock vein that the Get Up Kids play. But you know what? I like these guys better. It's the same style but these kids from San Jose do it better and with more heart. Soon to be re-released on Session Records but the packaging may differ. It's a cardboard sleeve that folds out into a spaceship. Really! (DM)

www.sloemusic.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Neal Shah (NS)

What do you get when you cross Suicidal Tendencies, Excel, Jane's Addiction, Ozzy Osbourne and Aladdin Sarsippius Sulejmanagic Jackson the III? You get the heaviest, most funky band to ever grace this planet, the Infectious Grooves. If I had a copy of my old high school paper, I could just copy my old review for their album "The Plague That Makes Your Booty Move..." but this is a new decade and it's time for some new fans. I know you all credit Korn and Limp Bizkit with the melding of funk and metal, but these new groove metal bands are only a weak comparison to the originators of the genre. Infectious Grooves, along with such contemporaries as Primus and Fungo Mungo, taught the world that we could mosh, as well as get funky. They made it okay to bang your head one minute, and then grab a member of the opposite sex and freak that ass the next. Adam Siegel laid down the mosh and funky guitars, Robert Trujillo slapped the bass like a screaming baby, Stephen Perkins pounded the skins and Mike Muir brought it all together with the smooth rhymes. Not since the Traveling Wilburys had such an array of musicians come together to produce something so magical. The album explodes with "Punk It Up" and only gets better from there. Songs like "You Lie and Your Breath Stank" and "Stop Funkin' With My Head" were instant classics and "Monster Skank" is arguably the best funk metal song ever written. It starts off with one of the heaviest moshes ever, which leads into the funky bass and then Mike Muir's soothing vocals struggle between anger and the need to dance! Plus there are skits with the irrepressible Sarsippius and a cameo by Ozzy. It's time you people did your homework!

Lancelot Link, Secret Chimp likes: The Pavers, Ripcord, Gob, Excel, Whiplash, Kill Creek, Swollen Members, McRad, Pope, Body Count

is a "powerful force in the Anti-Gun Violence Movement." Well la di da! Just kidding. There are 25 bands on the CD, plus there's CD-ROM material including some website links, mp3's by more bands and a live song from Saves The Day. Some of the bands featured on the CD are Nofx, The Thumbs, Big Wig, Pinhead Circus, All, Agnostic Front, Midtown, A New Found Glory, Youth Brigade and there's even a new song by Dag Nasty, which I was excited to hear. It's alright. Man, isn't this a ringing endorsement? I guess most of these songs are unreleased. Only one of them (Youth Brigade) deals with guns though. I guess if you like pop punk, this is a chance to get some new songs and support gun control. Good for you. (NS)

V/A - THE MY PAL GOD HOLIDAY RECORD 2, CD

This 13 track CD is basically a mix of really weird Christmas songs. Some of it sounds kind of edgy, with drum loops and robot voices, and then there are muzak type parts mixed with emo. It's really bizarre, and really hard to explain. The title made me sort of wary to begin with, since I just slaved away two months of my life working two bullshit retail jobs for the holidays,

which basically means I hate all consumers and all Christmas music. Plus, I'm not that big on that whole "organized religion" thing either. But if you are, and you're up for something weird and new when it comes to Christmas music, you can have my copy. (ES)

V/A - SUMMERTIME, CD

What a cool package....This is packaged as a digest sized zine with a camouflage fabric cover. Total DIY, Handmade and at only \$6 ppd it's a steal. This is good beginning to end and features "The crazy Screamy stuff that interests me the most" 20 songs by little known but awe inspiring bands like Racebannon, Thursday, To Dream Of Autumn, and Joshua Fit For Battle. If you love Hardcore you absolutely must send for this before you pay \$50 on E-bay for it in a year. Probably the most inspiring release I have seen in a year! (MY)

Want your stuff reviewed? Send it to:
Punk Planet Reviews PO Box 6014 East Lansing, MI 48826

SLURR - SUPERSPEEDCURE, CD

Slurr play generic, boring fuzzy indie pop/rock. Mix the worst parts of every indie cliché; fuzzed out guitars, overly long jams, and bland vocals and this is what you get. This will clog up the used bins for sure. (RE)

No Address

SMARTY PANTS - E=MC HAMMER, CD

Nerdy but creative rock. Nerds=i. Today's MTV bands=o. Check this band out! (BC)

Opulence Records P.O. Box 2071, Wilmington, NC. 28402-2071

SONGS OF ZARATHUSTRA - THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY, CD

Yelly Hardcore with diverse influences ranging from Neurosis to dance music (there's definitely a drum machine here). I like this quite a bit. (AE)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002

SPIDER CUNTS - STUCK UP 'N' MEAN, CD

All girl, basic punk band lays down the law about love, relationships and drinking. Yeah, I hate Bud Light too! (AS)

Beer City Records, P.O. Box 26035, Milwaukee, WI 53226-0035

SPRINZI - COVERAGE, 7"

An Italian band playing four melodic punk songs. The vocals are so out of tune with the music at times that it is painful to listen to. Highly unprofessional. (BJM)

Alice Dischi, Jacopo Borazza, Via Campana 7, 10125 Torino, Italy

SPIVEYS - V, CD

Quirky anguished mid tempo Punk that follows no framework. This is killer stuff that brings to mind the originality of such underrated bands as The Proletariat and Really Red. I just wish they had lyrics. I've been laid up with a fever and this is the only thing that got me shaking. Great! (MY)

doubleplusgood, POB 18721, Minneapolis MN, 55418

STATIC 84 - THE SERVANTS ARE RISING, CD

The layout of this CD looks like they'd be a metal/hardcore band, but this is more of a cross between skate punk and old school hardcore. The German accent gives the vocals an Oi! feel at times too. Good personal lyrics. (NS)

Join The Team Player Records, Altöttingerstr. 6A, 81673 Munchen, Germany

STYRIAN BOOTBOYS - BOOTBOYS 96, 7"

This comes from the same people who brought us the Strength Thru Oi compilation, so you know what to expect. German-sung Oi from this skinhead band out of Germany. Lots of pictures of them and their friends cover the insert, along with many other releases by the label. It's good for what it is, I suppose. (RE)

DSS Records, PO Box 739, 4021 Linz, Austria

SWINGIN' UTTERS - PAUL'S BAR, CD

If you already like he Swingin' Utters then chances are you already have this CD. Straight ahead melodic punk

rock quite similar to about a million other bands, but a little more polished. (JK)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690 San Francisco CA 941190-3690

THIS.DAY.FORWARD - THE TRANSIENT. EFFECTS. OF. LIGHT. ON.WATER, CD

The design layout of this CD itself makes it look like a techno CD. No joke. Iridescent light blue with orange and white text? So before even listening, I've been tricked twice into thinking it was something other than the scream-o stuff it really is, and unless you've got the insert to read along, you'd have no idea the lyrics are smart and interesting. Nine tracks of that chugga chugga scream scream stuff that makes moms cringe. (ES)

Eulogy Recordings P.O. Box 8692 Coral Springs, FL 33075

THROTTLE - TRANSPORTER, CD

Two lads making 11 songs of heavy guitar-ridden indie rock. Groovy and scary, just the way it should be and was in the early 90's. (BC)

Curve of the Earth Records 1312 Boylston St. Boston, MA. 02215

THUNDER BOMB - THUNDER BOMB, CD

Melodic Punk rock with snotty female vocals. Some Catchy hooks, but overall not that interesting. Features a pretty terrible cover of "High School" but the MC5. (JK)

TRAILER PARK ZORROS - HOOLIGAN HEART, CD

If this band lived up to their name, they would do everyone in Prescott, AZ a favor and put big "Z"

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Russell Etchen - (RE)

Judy's - Washarama - Not too many people are familiar with a little band called The Judy's but here in Houston, if you are in any way involved with indie or punk rock, The Judy's are a big deal. Stumbling across one of their rare-as-hell records is equivalent to finding the holy grail. The Judy's were active in the Houston area, in the late 70s, early 80s. Growing up in the town of Pearland, TX they decided that high school sucked, and formed a band called The Jets, which would later change to the Judy's. They formed their own record label, Wasted Talent, and put out a 7", and a year later, in 1980, an LP. Not long after that, they released the record that had already been driving the Houston and Austin scenes crazy, Washarama. At this point, The Judy's were one of the most talked about bands. With REM opening for them on the "Murmur" tour and opening up for the likes of the Talking Heads and the B-52s, the Judy's were on their way. Unfortunately they went their separate ways, later releasing another LP, Moo, and their swan song, the Girl of 1000 Smells 7" in 1985. Washarama is packed with by far some of the best pop songs I have ever heard. This pop band used punk anger and politics with a very catchy, up-beat, new-wave sound to talk about some of the things that affected them: popular high school girls (hated them), the TV, suicide, and high society among other things. The oddest, and probably best song on the album is "Guyana Punch", which is about the Jim Jones mass suicide/murders. The Judy's have been covered by the likes of Junior Varsity, Tullycraft, and countless other bands, I'm sure. These records are impossible to find, but check out www.thejudys.com and download entire real audio songs and get a taste of their greatness. One of the best pop bands ever, hands down. It's a shame this music hasn't been collected together. Maybe someday.

Hot right now: Faraquet "The View from this Tower", The Fucking Champs "III" and "IV", The Monks "Black Monk Time", Requiem for a Dream soundtrack, all Le Shok, The Explosion "Flash Flash Flash", Thin Lizzy "Jailbreak", 5040's party, The Fatal Flying Guilloteens live, Sea and Cake "Oui"

shaped slashes across the master of this release and spare anyone else from listening to this. This bland, lifeless punk schlock should have never left Mom's garage. And what's with the bass drum sounding like it's being hit with a toothpick? (RE)

No Address.

TRASH BRATS - ROCKET TO HEAVEN, 7"

The more I listen to the title track, "Rocket To Heaven", the more it sounds like a long lost Dead Boys track. A nice follow up to last year's "Must Be The Cocaine" 7". If these androgynous creeps could just keep away from the perfunctory covers, an actual Dead Boys' song here, and bless us with more originals of this caliber. (AS)

Lawless Records, P.O. Box 689, Hingham, MA 02043-0689

TRUST NO ONE - YOU'VE BEEN WARNED, CD

This hardcore band has a girl in it. I like bands with girls. Nine tracks about stuff like violence, crews, the struggle, hoods, staying true... You know the drill. (ES)

Eulogy Recordings P.O. Box 8692 Coral Springs, FL 33075

UBANGI STOMP, CD

Punk edged, rockabilly flavored, rock n roll round out an album filled with your standard rock themes and song titles. All reminiscent of the song from which they take their name. (AS)

Brain Drain Records, P.O. Box 39441, Greensboro, NC 27438

UNAVAILABLE-THE UNAVAILABLE SINGLE, CD

This is a girl trio that plays some catchy and crunchy tunes. Noisy guitar with some nice singing that occasionally goes to scream leads this recording. Some songs are catchier than others, but these gals will be worth checking out in the future so be the first cool kid on your block. (DM)

Emergency Records, ride1076@aol.com 267.257.6941

THE URCHIN - ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER SORRY STATE, CD

After all the shitty shit I have had to wallow through all month this sounds great. That is not a great compliment. This is by the numbers hardcore Punk by Japanese kids trying oh so hard to sound American. Think Screeching Weasel with no hooks. Its cool but not very special unless you want to win the "guess what country this band comes from" contest with your friends. (MY)

Snuffy Smile, 4-1-16-201 Daita, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 155-0033, Japan

THE VERMIN - P.S. I HATE YOU, CD

The Vermin do the Screeching Weasel/Queers thing in the same way that Creed kind of does the Pearl Jam thing. It would have been great fun in '92. (AS)

X-ray Records, 4471 Sir Richard Ave., North Royalton, OH 44133

THE VEX/AGGRO, SPLIT 7"

Call me crazy, but I think The Vex are sort of.. ska. Ska-core? Punk/ska? Something like that. Punk vocals over ska guitar. Aggro play angry thrash/punk and I think I liked them better. I couldn't find any label info or anything, so email those kids and get this pretty red vinyl for yourself. (ES)

Aggro- email jozercore@aol.com The Vex- email sonic77@aol.com

THE VIGILANTES - NO DESTINY, CD

Rancid meets the Misfits in the year 2001. I know we reviewers shouldn't always resort to the blah meets blah reviews, but so what, I don't think this band would mind. (BC)

TKO Records 4104 24th St. #103 San Francisco, CA 94114

THE VOIDS / NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH, SPLIT 7"

See review above.

Straightjacket Records, PO Box 136 Fullerton, CA 92836-0136

VULTURES - S/T, 7"

Great single with ex-members of Estrus bands such as the Fells, Mullens, and the Statics. The B-side is a wonderful cover of the Boys "Soda Pressing". Must have for Garage/Heartbreakers/Radio Birdman fans. (EA)

Dirtnap Records PO Box 21249 Seattle, WA 98111

THE WASHOUT CORPORATION - S/T, CD

Ohio produces some weird bands. This would be one of them. Over 10 goofy songs of chaotic sounds that cover much grounds...if you dig. (BC)

Dave 3600 Beavercrest Dr. Apt. 74, Lorain, OH. 44053

WESLEY WILLIS - RUSH HOUR, CD

See review above.

Alternative Tentacles PO box 419092 San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

THE WHITE OCTAVE - STYLE NO. 6312, CD

Moody emo rock with crunching guitars and tortured vocals. Blegh. (JK)

Deep elm Records, PO box 36939 Charlotte NC 28236

WORTHLESS - WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, CD

A pretty decent rip off of Rancid's self titled CD of some years ago. Worthless get mad punk points for looking like gay porn stars on the tray card. Pick it up if you are an OP IV, Rancid, Avail freak. (MY)

Metro Records, PO Box 1108, Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742

WOW & FLUTTER - POUNDING THE PAVEMENT, CD

My editor here at Punk Planet must hate me. This is tortuous Muzac that goes nowhere. This was soo hard to listen to beginning to end. I really have nothing to say about this band except that I'd have to be on

ecstasy, pot and mushrooms to like it. (MY)

Jealous Butcher, PO Box 14306, Portland OR, 97293-0306

X - HOME IS WHERE THE FLOOR IS, 7"

See review above.

Rocknroll Blitzkrieg, P.O. Box 11906, Berkeley, CA 94712, USA

V/A - 0 TO 60 IN 73 BANDS, CD

This isn't as bad as I thought it would be. There are about 77 bands playing about a minute's worth of mostly pop punk or hardcore. Some bands you may recognize are Bloodpact, Useless I.D., Oi Polloi and The Vapids, but I'm sure that's about it. (NS)

No!No Records, 1826 Virnankay, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

V/A - BUTT LETTUCE VOLUME 1, CD

It must be tough to gather up 15 songs by 15 different Columbia SC bands that suck. I say ban the sales of musical equipment in Columbia forever. There is a ton of modern rock, easy listening, and even bluegrass on this CD but no Punk. (MY)

Butt Lettuce Records, PO Box 4466, Columbia SC, 29240

V/A COMPACT - COMP, CD

Now I understand why Heart Attack, and MRR don't accept promotional/test pressings of CD's. This shoulda came with a super cool hardbound book detailing the bands and shit. This is a ambiguous comp full of new bands like Captain Vs. Crew, Made For A TV Movie, Rally Boy and 7 others. These artists totally draw within the lines so they never achieve intensity or even zest. This CD is either monotone throughout or the good music I blare everyday has made me tone deaf. (MY)

Jealous Butcher Records, PO Box 14306, Portland, OR 97293-0306

V/A - DISARMING VIOLENCE, CD

See review above.

Fast Music, 401 Broadway Ste 2011, New York, NY 10013

V/A - OH HOLY FOOLS, CD

This is really a split release between Bright Eyes and Son Ambulance. Both bands play easy listening pop with piano and light drumming. (AE)

Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554

V/A - THE MY PAL GOD HOLIDAY RECORD 2, CD

See review above.

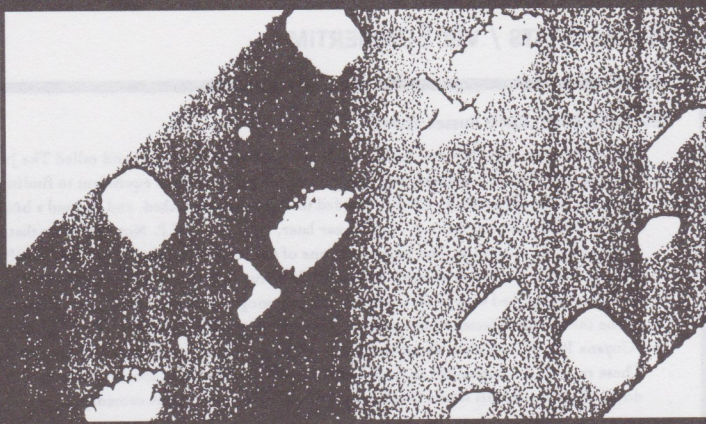
My Pal God Records 47 Hardy Dr. Princeton, NJ 08540

V/A - SUMMERTIME, CD

See review above.

Eric/KMBRecs, POB 145, Hope Valley RI, 02832

PLASTIC FILM



Hey, happy 2001. Have you seen the new Clash documentary directed by Don Letts, *Westway to the World*? Probably not, unless you've been on the film festival circuit, but I think that it'll be available soon and it's worth seeing. Since it's distributed/produced by a major label, I'm not going to give it too much ink in this column, but you can't really argue against good live footage of early Clash—unless you were actually there to witness it, maybe.

Anyway, this issue the tapes have started to roll in and I'm doing an all-review column to get things going. Two features and a collection of shorts, all made in full-on DIY style. Like I said in one of my earlier columns (probably in both of them), I'm not going to shy away from a bad review. Making movies is hard and way more filmmakers (at any level) fail than succeed. Still, any criticism should be taken as encouragement to get working on a new film and learn from your past mistakes. So keep sending tapes to P.O. Box 1102 Columbia MO 65205-1102. Don't forget to include some information about the film, who's in it, who worked on it and, most importantly, how folks can get themselves their very own copy of your masterpiece.

Good Grief. A feature film directed by Andrew Dickson.

I might as well get it out of the way now. Like quite a few of my peers, I was a full-on Advanced Dungeons and Dragons playing, skinny-ass geek growing up. My crowd consisted mostly of the nerdier, less rebellious types, so we never let smoking pot or listening to Maiden conflict with the gaming at hand. Though metal and marijuana are central to the plot of *Good Grief*, the sheer joy

of a movie that gets most of the details of my fantasy-filled childhood right is enough for me. After sitting through the recently released Hollywood version of *Dungeons and Dragons* (90 minutes long and a goddamn Beholder is the best monster they can muster), any movie that mixes proto-punk gamers and a soundtrack that features the Fucking Champs with role-playing is pretty all right with me.

Structurally, *Good Grief* is a more-or-less straightforward narrative. The main character, Chuck, is a classically awkward teenager heavily into *Dungeons & Dragons* (changed to *Monsters and Mayhem* in order to avoid the wrath of Gygax). His friends all seem to be following the traditional path of phasing gaming out of their lives in favor of drugs, music, or sex. His attempt to pull them all back together for a weeklong trip to Idaho in search of actual buried treasure (hidden as the prize for solving a *Masquerade*-esque puzzle book) is met first with refusal and then reluctant acquiescence from his skeptical friends. Simultaneously, his hopes to win the heart of snotty gamemaster Loris are frustrated by her insistence on the presence of Magnus, her college-aged boyfriend who has given up gaming for indie rock. The role of Magnus is played by Al Burian, who also writes the zine *Burn Collector*, plays in the band Milemarker, and writes a column for this very zine. Burian shows a natural comfort in front of the camera and delivers the most believable performance of the film.

As I referenced earlier, the surprisingly well put together and believable gaming sequences (done better and for exponentially less money than the Hollywood dreck)

are scored by the Fucking Champs and they do a superb job of adapting their math-metal to the material. Other local Portland, Oregon bands contribute to the soundtrack as well, and there's a fun scene in a club chock-full of hip kids with a fake (real?) rock band called the Portland Suede.

The film's weaknesses are primarily the writing and, partly a result of the former, acting. It's difficult to get caught up in the narrative because the relatively wooden dialogue and awkward delivery tend to get in the way. One of the most difficult aspects of writing good narratives is getting the dialogue to flow well and sound believable. Dickson takes most of the first half of the film to hit his stride and even when things are rolling plotwise, the dialogue is often forced and awkward. Dickson also falls into the trap of too often making his points through long-winded speeches rather than actions. And a cameo by rock-writer legend Richard Meltzer is sapped of any appeal by his horrible delivery.

Still, I can praise this movie for succeeding more often than failing and delivering a cohesive and fun narrative that does justice to the subcultures of both gaming and punk rock. The cinematography (by Portland experimental film fixture Matt McCormick) is strong, especially during the fantasy sequences that are supposed to exist within the game. The amount of energy that is required to produce a DIY feature is huge, and Dickson has managed to produce a solid first film. I'm looking forward to seeing whatever he does in the future.

For more info (or to order copies) you can check out www.goodgriefmovie.com. Dickson and

Burian will be going on tour around the country this spring, screening the movie and doing readings from *Burn Collector*. Check 'em out if they come to your town. [Andrew Dickson is also interviewed earlier in this issue]

Duck: The Carbine High Massacre. Produced and directed by Bill Hellfire and Joey Smack

Well, if *Good Grief* marks at least a decent effort at producing a DIY narrative with relevance to the punk community, *Duck!* can be read as a textbook on what *not* to do. The standard review acknowledgement of the amount of work that goes into any DIY release is worth restating here, but only because it feels so unfortunate that so much time, effort and energy were expended on making a movie this bad. Other than an extraneous and all-too-brief appearance by Today is the Day (who are most likely embarrassed to even be associated with this movie) there is absolutely nothing to recommend about the *Carbine High Massacre*.

Somewhere, somehow, it must have seemed like a good idea. Take the most sensational, over-the-top media-made tragedy of 1999 (as LL says, "Columbine happens in the hood every day"), and parody it. It's potentially a bold move. Kids in my hometown were sent home from school after Columbine for wearing the same black trenchcoats they'd worn to school every other day. And every semi-reject kid I've ever known has thought about taking a gun to school and blowing away all the jocks and cheerleaders. Though you wouldn't know it from the actual movie, I'm willing to concede that there is a germ of intelligence in attempting to pull off a satire based around the Columbine shootings.

But that germ disappears as the movie starts. *Duck!* can never figure out what it wants to be. Moments of it are clear parody. Others aspire to a more complex satire of the high school social strata. Others seem to be played straight and seriously. But across the board there is horrible writing, bad acting, and poor direction. Visually, the film is shot on video and lit like a home movie. Little or

no attention seems to have been paid to pacing, which is most likely an understandable byproduct of attempting a first feature. Carrying a narrative for 80-plus minutes is a difficult task and one that directors Bill Hellfire and Joey Smack are clearly not up to.

As far as the story itself, it's the same as the real life Columbine. Sort of. I guess. The protagonists are meant to be semi-sympathetic characters (though that vanished for me at the point I was reminded of the more vile racist aspects of their otherwise across-the-board hatred). Nothing they say is ever funny, though both actors appear to be trying very hard to be funny. The assorted jocks and meatheads who bully them are a uniformly unbelievable collection of punkish kids trying to fake it and not doing a very good job. Nothing in the film seems designed to make the audience care about any of the characters or any of the action, which is all the more frustrating since the real-life Columbine was so compelling.

My final gripe about this movie is its marketing. Every piece of info that I received about the film went to great lengths to hype how the filmmakers were arrested for making the movie, how many people didn't want it to be made, etc. While I'm sure that they ran into their share of trouble during the production of this movie, after watching the finished product, my only thought is "so what?" And for a supposedly controversial and shocking movie, that's the wrong audience response.

Duck! The Carbine High Massacre is available for \$30 from PO Box 447 Ringwood, NJ 07456 You can also look online at www.duck2k.com

Peculiar American Loneliness; Post Irony Orchestra; Jim: An Accidental Movie. produced and directed by Brendan Lott

Brendan Lott claims to make non-punk rock movies in a DIY fashion. Fine, though I'd say that the themes of alienation and detachment as well as a certain visual playfulness that can be found in all of his work have plenty in common with other outputs of punk culture. *Peculiar American Loneliness*, the longest of the three works, is a surreal story of a man becoming detached from his

surroundings. Though the word "surreal" is way overused, I think that *Peculiar American Loneliness* falls in a direct lineage from films like Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* or Maya Deren's *Meshe of the Afternoon*. It's well-shot, tightly edited, and, though it may be too non-narrative for many people, a worthwhile flick.

Post Irony Orchestra, Lott's second film shares a number of qualities (and even some footage) with *Peculiar American Loneliness*. It also features a protagonist estranged from the world; this time in the person of an actor who does a children's TV show reading existentialist writing. Most of the first part is shot on video and meant to have the feel of bad public access TV (cut with self-consciously funny old-tyme silent film titles). It's a good bit, but one that goes on too long. The second half of the piece is the same actor, now without his prisoner/clown makeup, playing a theremin along with a window fan. It's compelling in a way that's difficult to describe (like watching a fly buzzing around a window sill or a cat playing with crumpled up paper, maybe), and though some may lose interest, I was captivated.

The same can be said of the third film on the tape (unintentionally, according to Lott). *Jim: An Accidental Movie* consists entirely of barely edited footage of a man checking sound before a video shoot. With dialogue that consists mostly of the word "check" repeated ad nauseum, it's difficult to describe why I found this short so watchable, but I think it's a combination of appreciation for having gone through the exact same motions 100 times and the screen-friendly face of "Jim," whose hairless head drew me in like a beacon.

I would hesitate to recommend these three works to someone wanting to sit down and watch something passively entertaining. But as experimental films go, they have an undeniable presence about them that sucks you in and makes this a quality DIY release.

All three shorts can be ordered by sending \$10 to Brendan Lott IIII Pine St. #100 San Francisco, CA 94109 ©

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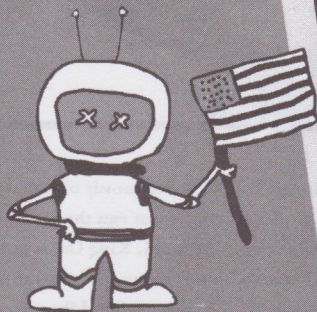
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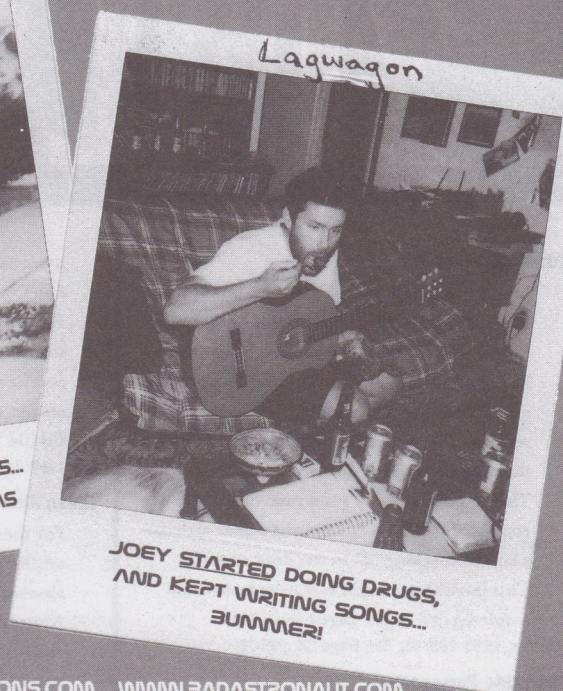


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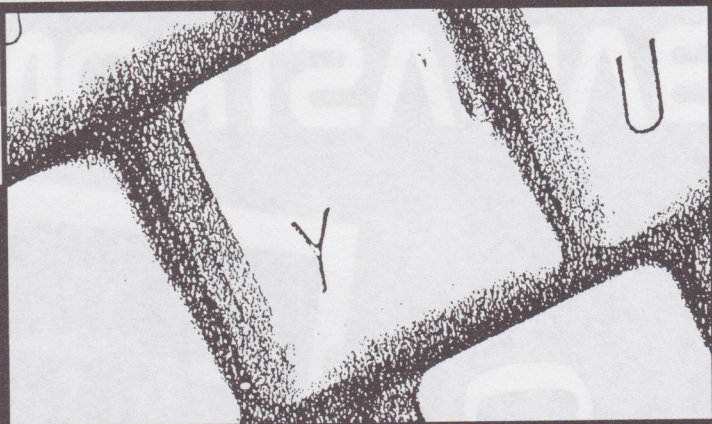
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PAPER

ZINES



Blue Valentine #1

A very intimate Personal Zine put out by a San Diego Punk Rocker. This zine is really tough to review since she tackles such harsh realities like her mother's Breast Cancer. The other topics found within are a bit lighter but still serious. She writes about her own puberty and the impact that Judy Bloom had on her. There is also a pretty good interview with a couple of (Militant?) Feminist poster activists who are attacking SD in the dead of night. This portion was especially informative and inspiring. 28 pages, digest sized. (MY)

Monika, 1633 28th St., San Diego CA, 92102

Burnside Perspectives

It seems so cliché to associate a boy's personal punk zine with Cometbus, but content-wise, this zine is similar. Stories of friendships and travel, bikes, coffee, beer, broken bottles, and sunsets. He's got friends (?) contributing to this zine, and it all flows and compliments each other's writing so well. Nice, eclectic layout that works well with the content. I really hope I get to see another one of these. (ES)

Send a donation to P.O. Box 13247, Las Vegas, NV 89112

Golog: Rebel Nomad

Jeff writes "I want to do something that matters." and it really seems like he does. This queer cultural zine has a lot of potential, and a lot of good ideas or thoughts that could maybe be expanded upon a little more. What I mean is that he will cut and paste together a phrase or something about being empowered, and then that's all. Maybe follow that with a story or something that relates, you know? There seem to be a lot of copied slogans or political cartoon type things, but maybe he could add more personal thoughts relating to those things and not just directly quote others. I guess really, I'd just like it to be more personal, because the few pieces that were, I thought were really great. If he'd like this to be a "personal, social, and political view from a queer anarchist's perspective," then maybe give more

personal perspectives, stories, thoughts, etc. I don't want this to sound like I am completely dissing this and being bitchy, because that is totally not it at all. I really do see so much potential for this zine to be a really great resource, so I thought some examples of what I'd like to see might help. (ES)

\$3 to Jeff Junker, 72 Sarah Ln., Middletown, NY 10941

Green Zine #9

For the Crimpshrine and Lookout Records set, here's another personal rant and story zine with the obligatory interviews, One Man's Army, Ann Beretta, and plenty of music reviews. I was in a piss poor mood when I started to read this, and thankfully it kind of took that feeling away. I need to get out more. (AS)

Greenzine, Box 112 RSAD, 1130 Greensboro Ln., Sarasota, FL 34234

Impact Press #29

Looks to be a punk-run newsprint zine about all kinds of politics. I'm not particularly interested in politics so I didn't take much time to read any of the articles, but they cover topics like: the religion wars, vaccine conspiracies, the military budget, vote-wasting, black myths, and more. There are record reviews and comics in here as well. Nicely put together. (RE)

PO BOX 361, 10151 University Blvd. Orlando, FL 32817

Inner Muscle #8

Pretty witty zine filled with left behind items and possible stories of people from other countries, wheelchairs, an interview with Henry Fiat's Open Sore, record reviews and a 7". The record contains some really aggro music from Disgruntled Nation. However there is no address, hopefully the people responsible will write PP and have the addy in the letters column in the next issue. (DM)

\$4 within somewhere, \$5 worldwide from somewhere (Wichita?)

King-Cat Comics and Stories, issue 57

Issue 57!!? Good lord! If you haven't checked out an issue of this zine yet then you are really

missing out. Composed mostly of very short, simply drawn comics that run the gamut from quite funny to quite sad, King Cat is one of the best comic zines around. This issue more of the same, and high quality. Like a personal zine done in comic form, without all the pretentious melodrama. Check it out. (JK)

Spit and a Half, PO BOX 881 Elgin, IL 60121 \$2.00

Law of Inertia #8

This is your standard fat-as-a-book Punk Planet clone with terrible design and lots of band interviews, record reviews, and ads for the rockin emo-hardcore kids to check out all the hot new tunes. One big beef: did you REALLY have to use a clip-art image of a hot rod for the Hot Rod Circuit interview? Also, I'm really trying hard not to believe that the cover was designed by Matt Owens of Volume One design, as it is awful. Last beef: What's up with the editor crying about his big party getting busted? Looks like FILLER to me. I didn't need to see a 5x5 inch image of your smiling mug either. How many of these magazines do we need? (RE)

3214 Jackson St., San Francisco, CA 94118

Mandragora #27

Formerly 59¢? I get the idea that this used to be a punk zine that has decided to go metal as in their words, "it is timeless music", and follow all things King Diamond. Contains stories, a state of metal today rant, reviews and enough punk rock to keep someone with an open mind entertained. They're just lucky that this out of the closet Mercyful Fate fan got this to review instead of some trapped in a corner punker. And now I know what that Deep Purple song, Mandrake Root, is about! (AS)

\$2ppd, P.O. Box 19806, Seattle, WA 98109

Match #10

I am so sorry to say this but I found this to be some of the most boring reading I have done in about 5 years. 36 digest sized pages that might as well have been in Sanskrit! The weird

thing is that the topics were so diverse. From record collecting to a travelogue of Haiti.

Geesh....(MY)

MATCH, POB 14831, Richmond VA, 23221

Mobile City #4

I'm not sure if this is a mistake but this zine seems to be from 1998 unless the people behind haven't had the opportunity to finish until now. Either way, it's a well done zine about bike messengers. This is a quality zine. No interviews, no music reviews, no bands. This here zine is filled with real life stories about setting up a world championship courier race, how one messenger got away from the cops, pieces of literature that raise real questions and insightful poetry about biking or just life in general among other items. There are great photographs and drawings as well in this magazine format, BW, quality paper zine. I'll say it again and be redundant, this is quality. (DM)

No Address...

Mobile City #5

A full-size zine about the bike courier culture. It's got a lot of bad poetry and fiction and non-fiction short stories. If the courier world is something of interest to you, you should probably check this out. (RE)

www.mobilecity.com

My Cat Walks All Over Me #1

Poorly laid out zine, with an essay about why zombies and fetuses are kinda similar, and why abortion is okay sometimes. Whatever. Then a list of things she hates and loves. Hates: Belle and Sebastian, Love, and Survivor. Loves: Suffocation (the band), Limp Bizkit, and of ALL things, the band Of Montreal. (RE)

Free, 2139 North Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 606047

Native Daughter

A personal zine that forgoes that usual graphics and advertisements filler crap and lays out about 40 pages of text. Deeply involved thoughts that require your utmost attention. I can't figure out if the writer, Sera, is overly serious, pretentious, on drugs or the new great writer of this genre. But it's available for stamps, trade, or whatever \$\$! (AS)

Sera Bilezikyan, 120 State Ave. NE #1494, Olympia, WA 98501-8212

Rabble Rouser #1, 2, 3

This is a personal zine from a graffiti artist. The first issue involves stories of our hero talking about his ex girl, going to a Michigan HC fest with the Locust, finding a drummer for the band and some photos of some great pieces, tags and throw ups (graffiti lingo, not vomit). Issue #2 has stories of our hero not being able to see hip hop shows, monkey

punch the cat puking and killing centipedes, mom being sick, and a lot more great picks of graffiti stuff. Issue #3, the mini issue includes how our hero's mother is more ill and may need blood from Richie (our hero) and saying goodbye to a friend and more fresh art. This is actually a pretty decent zine and there's some good story telling inside. Or as Richie may say it's "rad" (I actually use that word also). (DM)

Richie, 703 Crestbrook Ave. Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

Rude International #5

Mostly devoted to ska, and punk ska, this issue of Rude International is focused on the women of punk and ska, and features interviews with that chick from the Gadgets, those two chicks from the Dance Hall Crashers, The Donnas, and a bunch of other chicks I've never heard of. While this is a very good concept for an issue, it falls really short on any short on actually content or insight. Each of the interviews are so short that you learn almost nothing about these girls or about their lives as women in rock and roll. The rest of the issue is ok, focusing mostly on Reviews and such. The interview with Laurel Aitken is pretty cool, and liked the article about Joey Bishop, the last remaining (and forgotten) member of the Rat Pack. Worth checking out, but don't go out of your way. (JK)

Rude International, PO box 391302, Cambridge, Ma. 02139-USA \$3.50

Skatedork #4

I am not a skater. For a while, I wore DCs and pretended I could, but I finally came to the realization that despite the mad skills I flaunt when playing Tony Hawk Pro Skater (1 and 2), I'll probably never be in the same ranks as those other kick ass girl skaters. Despite all of this, I really liked Skatedork zine. It's full size, with lots of great pictures and personal skating stories. They also have a website you can check out, located at www.skatedork.org, so go there if you're into the skater thing, and check out what they're up to. (ES)

\$2 pod to 221 Spring Ridge Dr., Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

Slide The Needle #1

Web zine goes print with plenty of music reviews, columns, interviews (The Make-Up, Radio Berlin, Nashville Pussy, and more) and more. It runs the gamut from thoughtful to pandering worship just as most zines do. Get this before the internet is outlawed or obsolete. (AS)

Slide The Needle, P.O. Box 7445, Olympia, WA 98507

This Side Up Autumn 2000

Glossy covered oversized Punk Magazine from England that features informative Interviews with Madball, Shelter, Less Than Jake, Capdown, The Get-up Kids and Volcano the bear. If you enjoy any of these bands this mag is for you since the interviews are far superior to your standard zine. Very well put together and at \$4 PPD its a bargain. 95% music oriented. (MY)

Martin Hall, POB 666, Leicester LE2-7XH, England

Three Four Five Two Zine #6

This is a coming of age zine where the people involved write about poetry, restrictions of coming out, stories, and informative bit of Viacom and it's possessions in the media, and some comic strips and drawings. Not a bad cut and paste collection.

\$2, c/o Kjerstin Dalhart, 1605 High Ridge Road Benbrook, TX 76126

Walkie Talkie #1

Mostly a personal comic book type of zine with some literary text type stuff thrown in to even the score. While I really enjoyed the artwork in the comics, which I recommend for other practitioners of this form, the stories within them were a little beyond me. (AS)

\$2.50 ppd., 7205 Geronimo, N. Little Rock, AR 72116

Well-Fair?#3

This zine covers a lot in its 36 digest sized pages. The writer tells in detail of his experiences in the WTO riots. He also goes into some interesting political rants. The coolest thing in here was the sense of sex positivity he displayed in a paragraph where he describes playing spin the bottle with otherwise PC scenesters. I wish he would of gone more in this direction since most people in the scene are way too hung up about sex. We also get some neat tour diaries/travelogues. Good Stuff!! (MY)

Wellfair, POB 95516, Seattle WA, 98145

Zine Guide #4

The newest Zine Guide is full of even more resources to get and distro zines. They've got personal, music, literary, art, and everything in between listed here with summaries to give you the who, the what, and the where, all at your fingertips for your ordering pleasure. This full size zine is \$6 ppd. in the U.S., \$8 ppd. in Canada/Mexico, and \$10 ppd. outside North America. (ES)

Zine Guide P.O. Box 5467, Evanston, IL 60204 USA

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PAPER BOOKS

but you're only
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Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America

James Allen

Twin Palms Publications, 2000

The photograph on the dust cover states this book's horror succinctly.

A black teenager wearing a white shirt, ragged pants and no shoes stares blindly at the sky. His head is tilted up towards the tree limb from which he has been hanged. His name was Lige Daniels and he was lynched in Center, Texas on August 3, 1920. On the basis of allegations that he had killed an elderly white woman, about a thousand men battered down a jail door and hauled the youth off to an oak tree.

Lige Daniels hangs about six feet in the air. Beneath him are a mass of white men, many looking at the camera and smiling. The camera catches one boy, possibly 12 or 13 years old, looking up at the lynched 16 year-old. His smile and glee at the scene are clear. It's probably the best fun he has had all that long, hot summer vacation from school.

All of this was recorded for a postcard, complete with a "Place Stamp Here" print on the reverse side. As the scrawled message records, someone's Aunt Myrtle sent this card off to distant family members for inspection, just to make sure that the local excitement got properly reported. Americans photographed these horrors of tortured, mutilated and burned bodies as an advertisement for white supremacy and popular "justice."

Souvenir photos and postcards are a lost genre of American photography. The thousands of recorded lynchings

throughout the United States generated such profits as penny postcards gave to small-town photographers. Only in the mid-20s did the Postmaster General ban such postcards from the mail. For years thereafter, though, such photographs were available openly and then under the counter.

James Allen, who describes himself as a "picker," spent years collecting lynching photos from flea market and antiquarian dealers. He began collecting these images after encountering a photograph of Leo Frank's lynching. The result of Allen's efforts was a modestly mounted but emotionally charged exhibition at the New York Historical Society that drove the *New York Times* to take mournful editorial notice.

This volume, composed of the exhibition materials, documents as few other books the virulence of white supremacy. Often there are two, three, four and five black men hung together. Sometimes the photographed remains are no more than the charcoaled trunk of a human being. For the 1899 lynching of Frank Embree in Fayette, Missouri, the photographer-colaborator in the murder catches the naked Embree in a last living stare at the camera; in a following plate, Embree hangs from a tree. Often the hanging posse poses together with the victim. The 1909 murder of Will James was carried out in front of a crowd of thousands gathered beneath a cosmopolitan street arch with electric lights. His murderers first hung James from the arch, then pumped his body full of bullets, and then had a "coon barbecue." Some lynchers charged a nickel a shot to fire a

pistol into a dead body. Hearts, ears and sex organs were chopped out for display.

The book's graphic and unutterable images move a soul to both despair and wonderment at human monstrosity. It is pornography in a true and most evil sense, yet the despicable images are the purest education against racism. —Joe Lockard

The New Settler Interviews, Volume I: Boogie at the Brink

Edited by Beth Robinson Bosk

Chelsea Green Publishing, 2000

For more than 15 years, *New Settler* magazine has been documenting the growth of intentional communities in the forests of Northern California, or as publisher Jim Schley argues, "the creation of a new culture, the Mateel, which has become as distinct as . . . the Amish." Thomas Pynchon straightened the curves of this terrain for fictionalization in *Vineland*. Now they are gloriously restored, with the reduced authorial footprint and higher-fidelity mapping interviews afford here.

The book could hardly be more timely, since American politics is still trying to sort out exactly what the appearance of environmental direct action tactics in the streets of Seattle, DC, and many pushpins on the map thereafter, means. This book offers clues, as when movement heroes like Headwaters treesitter Julia Butterfly Hill and Earth First!'s Daryl Cherney get air time, but what makes this book invaluable is the window it offers onto the construction of community in the timberlands, a community that has proved

capable of sustaining protest movements that are partly responsible for reinvigorating the American left.

Most of the book's speakers came north as refugees fleeing some aspect of urban life; some as workers following the contours of the drug economy. You'd be surprised how few cite '60s counterculture as their reason for doing so. More significant than any shared ideological principle, as a unifying force among the Mateel, was the challenge of building a new life in an inhospitable place, a trope in which all migrants, past, present, and future, may locate themselves. What Bosk's careful interviewing reveals is an ecology of practice and a respect for it as such. From David Katz's rise as an alternative energy mogul to Michael Huddleston and Steven Day's work as hospice providers; from the reflexively inward pursuits of shakuhachi player Monty Levenson to Huddleston and Day's pursuit of the Bureau of Land Management through bureaucratic loops; from Freeman House's effort to subvert the dominant paradigm by proving the coevolution of salmon and man, to the more familiar practice of those direct action activists who confront it: the picture we get is of a community that values, cultivates, and defends its own internal diversity.

While some may tire of the spiritual beliefs expressed in spots, rest assured that as on a river, there is always something of interest around the next bend in these conversations. Bosk's talent for drawing individuals out, and arranging their words to create a compound sense of place, make this valuable reading for those seeking to understand the collective identities and principles being forged today. And the history they retell—particularly of federal efforts to erad-

icate marijuana cultivation—suggests that one thing that connects Mendocino to East Oakland to Colombia are the drug wars the United States wages to "save" them.

—Aaron Schuman

5 Days that Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond

Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair
Photos by Allan Skula
Verso Books, 2000

Published to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the WTO uprising, *5 Days that Shook the World* is a diverse and thought-provoking document of both the actions on the streets of Seattle in November, 1999 and the movements that have sprung forth from there. About half of the 130-page book is devoted to the events in Seattle—separated into both a minute-by-minute report and a look back at what was accomplished there. The rest of the book looks at the movements since, specifically the a16 protests in Washington, DC, and last summer's protests surrounding the Republican and Democratic conventions.

While well written (I'm a sucker for Cockburn's biting prose, whether it's in his books, his column for *The Nation*, or in his and St. Clair's newsletter *Counterpunch*) and very informative, the \$20 price tag may take some people aback. And it should. At 20 bucks, *5 Days* is about five dollars too much. But that doesn't mean the books is worthless—not by a long shot. You just have to know what you're getting into.

As a primer to the burgeoning "newer" left movement, *5 Days* is effective. It introduces the basic ideas driving activists; their strategies for action; and the coalitions that have grown. Cockburn and St. Clair also do a fine job of historical linking—particularly in pointing out how this movement is different from those that

came before. Their analysis also carries with it a healthy amount of skepticism—they don't gloss over the fragile bonds that some of these coalitions are built on.

And as a document of social movements, this book is indispensable. Its reports from the front lines will be read for years to come. The report from Seattle is particularly useful, as St. Clair manages to combine both man-on-the-street reports with effective analysis and probing interviews.

But there's something about this book that doesn't completely click with me. Perhaps it's that much of this book isn't new material—it's reprinted from *Counterpunch*, Cockburn and St. Clair's fantastic bi-weekly newsletter (which only costs twice as much as the book—subscribe at www.counterpunch.org). Or it could be that the book seems to have slipped onto the press without a copyeditor looking at it—there are typos *everywhere*. Or maybe it's the fact that the photos selected (which run full page and full color for the last 10 pages of the book—boosting the print cost quite significantly, I'd imagine) aren't the most interesting I've seen from the streets of Seattle. Or more than likely, it's a combination of all three that make the book seem *less* than important. Which is a shame, because what's in the book—and what's it about—is important.

The growing movement against globalization and for social justice is an important one. It is a young movement that will continue to grow as long as corporations and governments work together to put profits before people (unless those very same entities efforts to destroy the movement are successful). It's a movement that flew under the radar of the establishment press, and as a result slightly messy documents like *5 Days in Seattle* are left to chronicle the action. Which maybe is how it should be. —Daniel Sinker

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.

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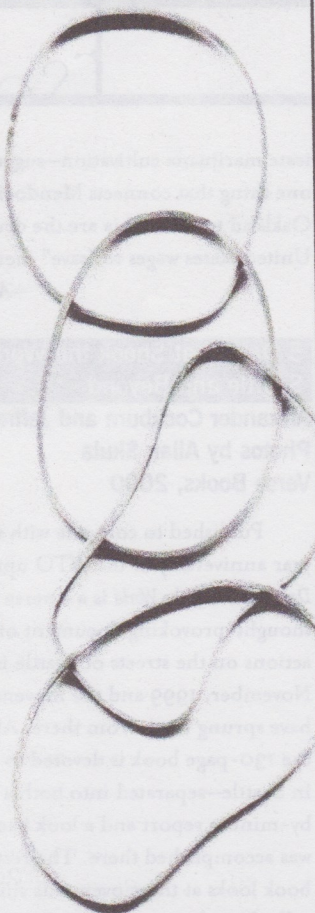
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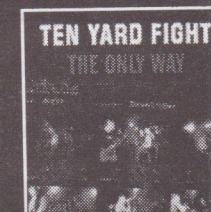
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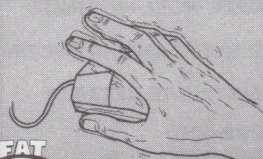
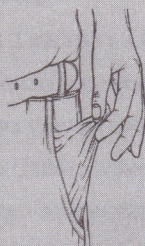
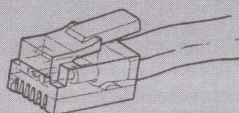
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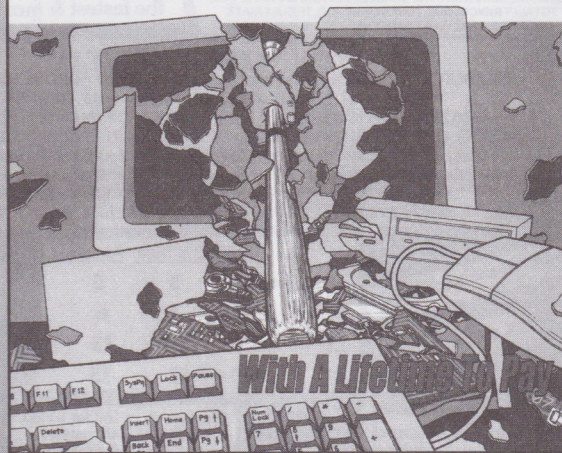
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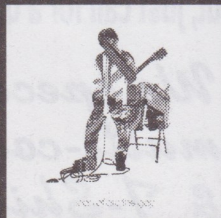
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PP23 CHUMBAWAMBA: Has mainstream success blunted their anarchist ideals? Also inside are interviews with GEARHEAD ZINE, LOVEITT RECORDS, SUBTERRANEAN DISTRIBUTION, THE VAN PELT and THE YOUNG PIONEERS. Articles on the PIRATE RADIO movement, on being an OUTREACH WORKER FOR HOMELESS YOUTH, GURILLA POSTERING and the RECENT CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE TEAMSTERS. 154 pgs

PP26 STEVE ALBINI, talks. Also interviewed in PP26: AVAIL, SMART WENT CRAZY, SERVOTRON, POLY VINYL RECORDS, COMPOUND RED and RED MONKEY. Articles include a piece about TOUCH & GO RECORDS' RECENT LAWSUIT WITH THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS, NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, the POLITICS OF WHOLE FOODS and THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GRAFFITI ARTIST TIE. Jam-packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A rare talk with Bikini Kill's KATHLEEN HANNA. Also interviewed in PP27: DISCOUNT, CHROM-TECH, ASSUCK, the PEECHEES, and PRANK RECORDS' Ken Sanderson. Articles include a look at the GROWING Hysteria SURROUNDING TEEN VIOLENCE; BRINGING HUMANITARIAN AID INTO IRAQ; A COLLEGE COURSE BASED ON PUNK and TWO ANTI-RACIST SKINHEADS WERE MUR-

DERED IN LAS VEGAS THIS JULY—Punk Planet investigates. 156 pgs

PP28 SHOCK TREATMENT takes a look at the healthcare crisis through the eyes of musicians. This revealing article exposes the major label hypocrisy in denying its lifeblood health benefits. Also in this issue, KEVIN SECONDS, THE GET UP KIDS, JETS TO BRAZIL, RESIN RECORDS, filmmaker PENELOPE SPHEERIS, ATOM & HIS PACKAGE and NEGATIVELAND. Articles include a look at RACE IN PUNK, 10 REAL REASONS TO HATE CLINTON and a RETURN TO ISRAEL. 152 pgs.

PP29 checks in with SLEATER-KINNEY. In addition to S-K, PP29 features a talks with KID DYNAMITE, The Metro-shifter's K. SCOTT RICHTER, JESSICA HOPPER, publisher of HIT IT OR QUIT IT ZINE, RAINER MARIA. Articles: Kim Bae brings you aboard as LOS CRUDOS TOURS SOUTH AMERICA. Author Mimi Nguyen takes A PERSONAL LOOK AT VIETNAM—as a homeland, as a war and as a state of mind. Also featured in PP29 is a look at THE USE OF PEPPER SPRAY BY THE POLICE; a FREE BIKE PROGRAM and the GROWING UNREST IN THE KOSOVO REPUBLIC. Plus all the other goodies. 136 pgs.

PP30 THE MURDER OF IRAQ 18 pages to coverage of the horrible destruction reaped on the Iraqi people by the US and UN's economic sanctions. Also in this issue: BRAT-MOBILE, TODAY IS THE DAY, THRILL JOCKEY, SEAWEED, WICKED FARLEYS, VINYL COMMUNICATIONS and BLUETIP. Articles on JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA'S VICTORY IN MINNESOTA; the MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT, a militant group bent on ending gentrification in San Francisco; THE GREEN PARTY IN ARCAT, CALIFORNIA; and a UNION VICTORY IN A NICARAGUAN SWEATSHOP. Plus an expanded DIY section, columns, reviews and much much more. 136 pgs.

PP31 features a talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TED LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and DÅLEK. Punk Planet

#31 also looks at the DEAD KENNEDY'S LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former band-mates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BRIDES FROM RUSSIA and LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr, THE ETERNALZ, ASPHOLD RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and eclectic art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER. In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept./Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING INSTRUMENT, THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIQUIN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONIE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tienanmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRIAGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican commu-

ty. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR. PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REP-LIKANTS, CADILLACA, OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—except for reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER, the frontman of punk legends THE CLASH. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE'S DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interviews with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMP-WRIST and SARGE'S ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, PP37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; Q AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAD STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

PP38 July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP takes a look at the new anti-globalism movement. Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NOAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA, DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE, UNWOUND talk about building their new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRAHEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SOFT SKULL BOOKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAV yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement. Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVEMENT. Much more. 156 pgs.

PP39 Sept/Oct 2000 Six years after punk "broke" into the mainstream, Punk Planet talks to many of the bands involved, GREEN DAY, JAWBREAKER, JAWBOX, SAMIAM, GIRLS AGAINST BOYS, THE SMOKING POPEES, FACE TO FACE, JIMMY EAT WORLD, TEXAS IS THE REASON. Think you know what happened? Think again. Also in this issue: inter-

views with KILL ROCK STARS founder SLIM MOON; THE EXPLOSION; MARY TIMONY; SUE COE; ULTRA-RED; DIS-INFO.COM; and the CENTRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND. Articles in this issue include a look at how groups like the WTO ARE EFFECTING THE LIVES OF THE GREAT APES; a report on the CHICAGO POST-ROCK SCENE; and noted economist Doug Henwood writes "BOOM FOR WHOM" which puts a new perspective on the "new" economy. 152 pgs

PP40 November/December 2000. MEET THE NEW BOSS Through interviews with controversial biographers, Punk Planet #40 envisions the hell that the Bush presidency will be—and the hell that a Gore presidency would have been. PP40 also features interviews with INSOUND.COM; The Fucking Champs' TIM GREEN; ELECTRICAL AUDIO; Anarchist theorist JOHN ZERZAN; MARCELLE DIALLO; VERSO BOOKS; MILEMARKER; and MATMOS. Articles in PP40 include a look at the WAR THE GOVERNMENT IS WAGING AGAINST THE NAVAJO INDIANS in Big Mountain, AZ, the PLIGHT OF C NUMBER PRISONERS IN ILLINOIS and a look back at WELFARE REFORM. 152 pgs.

PP41 February 2000 PUTTING DC ON THE MAP. PP41 takes a look at the history of the DC punk scene. From the influence of the Bad Brains to the birth of Minor Threat; from a violent Ian MacKaye to a not-yet-Rollins Henry Garfield. PP41 offers a revealing and detailed look into punk's past. Interviews in pp41 include: (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY, THE WIPERS, THE LOCUST, TNI BOOKS, and DIY reggae pioneers RAS RECORDS. Articles in PP41 include a look at POETRY SLAMS and a devastating look at the BOMBING OF A COLOMBIAN VILLAGE. Additionally in PP41 is an inspiring talk with SUE MECCA, a 40-year-old punk rock mom. Plus, DIY tips, columns, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs.

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To find out more information about the Home Alive organization visit www.homealive.org.

Ali Abunimah

www.abunimah.org

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE:

Finding Life on Death Row

There are many organizations that deal with death penalty and prison issues. This is just a small selection:

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1320 18th Street NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.nodeathpenalty.org

There are chapters of the Campaign all over the country. Visit the website to find out if your town has a chapter.

Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation
2161 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
www.myfr.org

In\$anity

The Support Coalition/Dendron Magazine
PO Box 11284
Eugene, OR 97440-3484
www.mindfreedom.org

Mad Lib
www.madlib.org

Pedal Power

Mentioned in the article:

Bikes not Bombs
59 Amory St
Roxbury, MA 02119
www.bikesnotbombs.org

Not mentioned in this article, but always a good resource for pro-bike/anti-car information and rides:
Critical Mass
www.critical-mass.org

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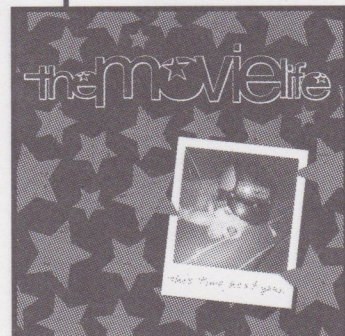
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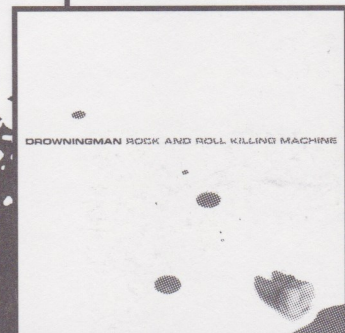
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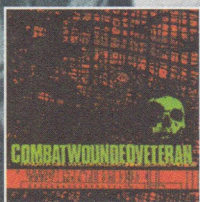
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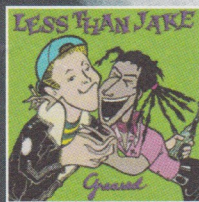
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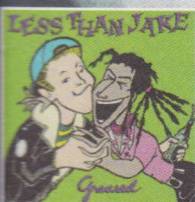
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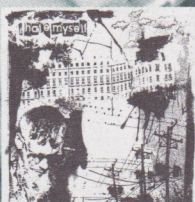
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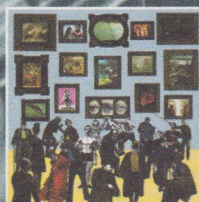
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Photo by Aaron O

PUNK PLANET 42

march/april 01

"I want to be known as a person. I think that's half the problem with the death penalty—people are afraid to put faces on us."

AM REP RECORDS CALLS IT QUILTS • SAMIAM • THE GITS: REMEM

PUNK PL



FINDING LIFE ON DEATH